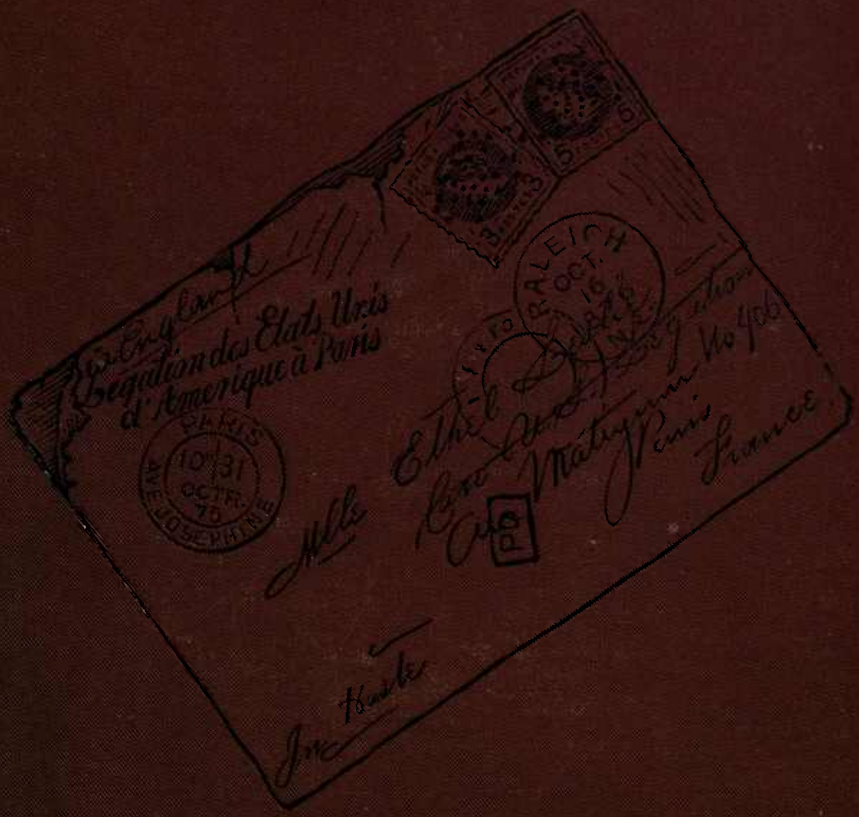
MARKED "*In Haste*"



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MARKED "IN HASTE."

A Story of To-Day.

"And therefore as a stranger give it welcome,
There are more things in Heaven and earth,
Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

HAMLET, Act I, Scene V.

NEW YORK:
TROW'S PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING CO.,
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1883.

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TO THE MEMORY OF THE

KIND FRIEND AND PHILANTHROPIST

WHO EARLY AIDED AND ENCOURAGED THE AUTHOR,

THIS SOUVENIR OF HER FIRST YEARS IN PARIS,

IS AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED.

2212587

PREFACE.

In looking over an old diary, I have stumbled upon some curious notes, odds and ends here and there, relating mostly to the American Colony resident in Paris during the years inclusive of 1874 and 1879. The actors are still living; why should my notes alone remain in oblivion?

The greatest artists study only from nature. How can an humble pen-portraitist hope to succeed otherwise than by following in their footsteps? In a study of real life, creations of imagination are not unlike copies of great originals. Seeming fidelity to nature but distorts the mental vision and accustoms it only to imperfections.

Without malice, perhaps without art, I have dared to study from "the nude model." Laying aside the hypercritical allusion to Art and great masters, we might say, in more homely English, that one should never spoil a story for relations' sake.

My chief solicitude has been to present faithful

rather than flattering likenesses. As photographers say, "some negatives are so strong that one does not even need sunlight to print clear pictures."

In speaking of historical places, simple fidelity has been aimed at. Château Ferrières is well known, and to the courtesy of the distinguished Barons Rothschild many owe the pleasure of having seen one of the remarkable palaces of the world.

The description of the interior of Beaufort Castle, with its superb and unique works of art, is a personal recollection of the Marquis Pallavicini's country seat, about two hours distant from Cremona, Italy. Count André may still retain his incognito. It would not be difficult, however, for the connoisseur to say who had the most beautiful house in Paris, or the most complete private collection of works of art on the continent.

So the banquet is spread. To those who tire of too much cheer remember that, with Macbeth, "ourself will mingle with society and play the humble host."

NEW YORK, March, 1883.

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MARKED "IN HASTE."

CHAPTER I.

LORD BEAUFORT TO HIS COUSIN, ATHOL BRANDON.

November 1, 1876.

My Dear Athol:

You will scarcely expect a letter from me so soon; but the truth is that I must unburden my heart to some one: to whom better than yourself? Do not take this as an equivocal compliment. You well know that I confide almost everything to you, and I fancy that even the word "almost" is out of place. I am about to make a clean breast of everything that has happened since I left dear, perfidious Albion—a clean breast, my dear boy, nothing more nor less; so prepare yourself with copious draughts of the vulgar B. and S. and listen to my tale. The Tidal from Folkestone brought us in at an unearthly hour, and through some mischance my engagement to dine at the Embassy quite miscarried. (Of course I refer to yesterday.) I took some tea, and decided on a long tramp in the direction of the Bois.

Dressed in my travelling costume, I scarcely cared

to meet any of my lady friends. I hear that Paris is full of *dames Anglaises;* and who knows but the first rencontre would have been the very one that I wished to avoid? One feels so seedy and miserable after even a few hours in a railway carriage. Considering that the channel was unusually disagreeable, I had anything but a comfortable trip. Some days one feels all upset, without knowing why; and I think yesterday was one of those days. As I say, I started for the Bois, and chose (be it said to my credit) unconventional paths, so that I saw but few of my countrymen and women. I felt in so savage a mood that, as my American friend Weldon remarked, I "could bite a tenpenny nail in two." After going as far as Longchamps, the last rays of the setting sun decided me upon returning to Paris.

What a disgusting sight the Bois is, to be sure, with the same old tawdry and painted faces, the same horrid traps, miserable hacks, fagged *demi-mondaines* and the vulgar equipages of the parvenues who never miss the *tour de lac.* Back and forth, back and forth: first a grand bow of recognition; then a malicious little salute; next a friendly wave of the hand; and so on. They say that the days of the *tour de lac* are on the wane, and that the Avenue des Acacias will be the resort for the ladies. Thank God! Those poor unclassed saints, who have a husband's name but neither his heart nor money, will have some place to promenade where the flaunting liveries of the *pro tem.s* cannot have right of way. When that day comes my dear mother shall go about in Paris as much as she likes; but

for the present, a lady is out of place in an afternoon drive to the Bois de Boulogne. In unfashionable routes if she likes ; but *no* tour of the lake ! I had barely reached the Arc du Triomphe when I met Lanesborough. He is as much of a cad as ever, and was about to sicken me with some new tale of his conquests, when I bolted. I suppose he is still at the top of the Avenue, and in a state of comfortable distress at my sudden apparition and disappearance. Heaven bless him ! I was too ill-humored to think of any one but myself.

Now to unburden myself. I presume you have forgotten that I commenced this letter with an object in view—an object other than the one of merely writing to my best friend. Said object is to relate a bona fide adventure, and one that promises me the loss of that already *blasé* organ—a heart. After leaving Lanesborough, I walked swiftly down the Champs Elysées. Just before reaching the Round Point I stumbled on a letter, or evidently a package of letters, enclosed in a yellow envelope and addressed to Mlle. Ethel Leslie, Avenue Matignon, No. 406. The envelope was stamped with the seal of the United States Legation, and marked "In Haste"—or as it read in French, "*Pressé.*" Naturally, I looked at the package several times, and, as it was about twilight, I decided on leaving it myself at the given address. You know, my dear fellow, I am scrupulous with regard to letters. Who knew the value of this one, or the distress its loss might occasion ? I found myself re-reading the name, "Ethel Leslie," and wondering who could be

the owner of so romantic a cognomen. Was she young? Was she handsome? Was she maid or widow? Was she—in fact, *what* was she? And how on earth did a package of letters come to be lying unnoticed at this hour of the day in so favorite a walk as the Champs Elysées?

Thus ruminating I reached Avenue Matignon. These October days are already so short, that when I arrived at the house it was time to light the street lamps. The enormous *porte cochère* was closed, but in answer to my ring it was opened, and I found myself face to face with madam the *concierge*. I inquired for Mademoiselle Leslie, said I had a letter for her (showing the envelope), and was about to give it to the woman, when she smilingly refused to take it, saying:

"Go right up. Monsieur is expected."

I expostulated; she remained firm. "I was to go up; Mademoiselle was waiting," she added, as she deliberately put two fat paws behind her, and with a coquettish, seventy-odd-years giggle (great heavens! when will these French daughters of Eve cease to be giddy!), refused to touch the parcel, and turned away with a knowing look, saying:

"*Entresol* to the left."

Entresol to the left be hanged! I had not bargained for so much. The words "Expected," "go right up," and the last tuppenny-ha'penny malicious look was too much for my curiosity. What could the woman mean? Evidently some one was expected with letters; and I might as well represent that *some one* as anybody else. Determined to leave

that envelope, if possible, in responsible hands, I mounted and rang at the *entresol* to the left.

A smiling maid opened the door. Before I could speak she gave me a look all intelligence, and said quickly:

"Follow me," at the same time dragging me inside the entrance and closing the door softly and rapidly. I seized her shoulder.

"Mademoiselle," I said determinedly, "I am not the person you think. I have some letters for a Miss Ethel Leslie, which I found——"

"Yes, yes," she interrupted vivaciously. "I know all you would say, but it is useless talking with me. My mistress has been waiting now nearly a quarter of an hour, and she gave orders that the letters were to be delivered into her own hands by the person who brought them. It's as much as my place is worth to disobey her, so follow me."

My dear boy, what could I do? I had to follow her, of course, and at the same time I felt a bit curious to see the lady in question. "Ethel Leslie;" a deuced pretty name; and why not owned by a deuced pretty woman? I was in a way soon to know. The maid (who tried to touch my hand as we came to an obscure passage) was as lively as an Italian lizard. What did she take *me* for, I wonder? We finally stopped before an open *portière* of gobelin, and I was told to enter.

A slight figure in gray was bending over some papers at a writing-desk, and, without raising her eyes at the maid's explanation, she extended her hand to take the letters. At last I commenced to

breathe freely. I had gotten rid of my unexpected encumbrance. Thinking this a good time to slip off, I hastily said :

"*À votre disposition*, mademoiselle!" and started to go. Her words paralyzed me.

"You may as well wait here," she said with a soft voice. "I shall be ready in two minutes, and the carriage is already announced. Let me put away these papers and finish reading the letter you just brought me."

Oh, fatal chance! That was the moment in which I should have explained my position, and how I happened to find myself in her house the bearer of a parcel evidently of some value, and to offer my excuses for being unable to serve her further. Can you imagine why I did not? Read back and stop at the line where I tell you that "without raising her eyes she extended her hand," etc., etc. Those words explain all my weakness. I could not go without seeing her face, and I felt that she must be beautiful. The room, or boudoir, was rich in harmonious colors, but it was so dark that one could scarcely distinguish any object. While I was thinking on my strange situation, the lady spoke. Her voice was still charming, but the words were more authoritative.

"The reference you bring," said she, "is perfect; and above all am I pleased to learn that your circumstances have thrown you among people of position. You will better understand a lady, and the delicate service she may require at your hands. It is understood that the greatest secrecy is exacted;

and twice a week I shall expect you here at this hour." Abruptly, "Do you speak English?"

At these words she raised her eyes. The maid had gone out, and we were alone in the room. Before she finished I turned the collar of my coat up. I had drawn from my pocket a tourist's pair of smoked glasses, and was deliberately adjusting them when she looked at me. You will wonder at these precautions. I was evidently mistaken for a guide or confidential attendant to a young and charming woman. The circumstances were full of mystery, and I longed to fill my empty life with some real excitement. I would be the guide—I would be a valet, if necessary, two evenings in the week; and I would, in short, forget that I was Francis, Earl of Beaufort, while following up an adventure that promised its disentanglement in some delightful Parisian love affair. Was it a love affair? of course. Was it Parisian? something whispered, "No." The letters came from the United States Legation, the name was Leslie, and the lady was——an American. Of that I was now quite certain.

While these thoughts flashed through my mind, the maid entered with a lamp, and I saw fully for the first time my new mistress. Her beauty was so much more than I had anticipated, that my eyes riveted to her countenance. I had hoped to see a pretty woman, but scarcely expected to find myself in the presence of the most beautiful one that I or anybody else had ever seen. I cannot describe her to you at present; but I know that no face could be more lovely than hers. She must have thought me stupid,

for she hastily repeated her question, asking if I spoke English, the while looking me over quite deliberately. Fortunately my costume, my glasses, and the half-shadow that obscured my person were more than enough to mask my real identity (I feared I might look like a gentleman even in an uncertain light), and she must have been satisfied with her scrutiny, for as I answered "Yes" she uttered a little "Ah!" and coldly turned away her head, giving some order, in an undertone, to the maid.

I breathed freely when her splendid eyes were no longer scanning my face, and, instead of feeling ashamed of my false position, was more determined than ever to see the end of so curious an adventure. She arose with a graceful movement of the body that an Andalusian herself might have envied. Taking the letters, a small parcel, and some keys, she announced her readiness to start. Start? yes; but where to go? She passed in front of me, the maid at her heels, and I followed. At the foot of the staircase a decent valet stood waiting. He opened the door, and I saw a brougham with a capital pair of thoroughbreds evidently awaiting the lady's pleasure. I handed her in, she motioned me to the small seat *vis-à-vis*, and we drove off.

CHAPTER II.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

November 2d.

Other than the first few words she had not addressed me; and I wondered what was the delicate service so regularly to be required. She leaned back in a corner of the carriage with her hands firmly clasping the letter. Her face was so clouded with thought that she seemed to ignore even my presence. We rolled along in silence. Night was fast falling upon Paris. I saw the Place de la Concorde already aglow with its myriad lights. The gardens of the Tuileries, with the orange trees whose blossoms fair *fiancées* covet, lay a dark mass to the left. Passing swiftly by, we turned into the quay that flanks the right of the famous Palace. The Seine, with here and there an illuminated wave, glided on in enchanting softness. The skies gave promise of a night of starry splendor. The low rumble of the carriage on the asphalt harmonized at will with the gentleness surrounding the hour. At that time few, if any, vehicles were visible. Paris was dining, and I—I had had no dinner. Imagine, my dear Athol, how great an Englishman's distraction must be when he absolutely

ignores the object of one of Owen Meredith's finest outbursts! What are the lines? Let me see:

"We may live without poetry, music, and art,
We may live without conscience, we may live without heart;
We may live without friends, we may live without books—
But civilized man may not live without cooks.
He may live without books—what is knowledge but grieving?
He may live without hope—what is hope but deceiving?
He may live without love—what is passion but pining?
But where is the man who may live without dining!"

Well, in spite of Meredith, I thought of anything else at that moment. I was alone in a carriage with an unknown and beautiful girl when the busy world was occupied, for once, with its own affairs. This was the one thought that possessed me. I tried to feel a reasonable sense of shame at my equivocal position, but alas! I could only realize the one fact that the charm of my position was undeniable. I adore beauty, and was drawn toward Miss Leslie. Her face was one of incomparable innocence, with a tone of sadness and mystery that would have interested the most insensible; and even with all of my habitual indifference, I yielded at once to the fascination of her presence. At last she spoke. We had crossed the bridge Henri Quatre, and were on the other side of the Seine. As the carriage went swiftly on, I recognized the students', or Latin Quarter, and could not but wonder where we were going. She said:

"I am obliged to visit in secret one who is very dear to me, and whose existence in Paris is unknown even to my best friends. I may not need

your assistance, but it is not well for a young lady to go about the streets alone. Your only duty will be to accompany me back and forth in these nocturnal visits. Your arm must be ready for my defence should I need it; you will yield a blind obedience to anything I ask in reason, and beyond the days devoted to my service you will not only be at liberty, but will please forget your employment. Should we meet, never under any circumstances recognize your employer. I cannot tell how long I may need you—I trust a short time, but certainly for several weeks. Be silent and unobserving, and your remuneration shall be satisfactory."

She looked me in the face with such intelligence and fearlessness that it seemed as if she must read me through and through. God forbid! She ceased speaking, and I felt a momentary impulse to tell her who I was and the mistaken position that my curiosity had placed me in. It was not too late. She might forgive me. I was a gentleman, and ready to serve her well—aye, a thousand times better than any hireling, and to shiver a lance in her defence with all the fervor of a medieval knight. Then I thought, "How will she receive my apology and explanation? Will she believe me? and has my conduct aught in common with knight or gentleman?" A little good common sense at this moment came to my aid. Then it was impossible to recede. I might frighten her, and I might become entangled in some legal scandal. The thing was to play my part through to the end that evening, and on the morrow to write any excuse, withdrawing my accept-

ance of the position she offered. I would decide that night whether I should leave her in ignorance of the real state of things and plead sudden departure as the cause of my absence, or, putting aside my own feelings, make a clean breast of my connection with her affairs—how I found the letter, and how, thinking to innocently discover some French *affaire de cœur*, I had become the sharer of a secret of no little gravity. Fate decided that I should keep silence.

By this time we had gotten far beyond the river, and while I was still thinking and turning over in my mind what the evening would bring forth, we drew up quite abruptly, in Rue des Sts. Pères, before an old-fashioned stone house. My companion lowered her veil, said "We get out here," and motioned me to alight. I was already in the act, and offering my hand; she was soon standing beside me. I turned to ring at the door in front of us, when she took my arm hastily.

"It is not here," she explained; "we must now turn into another street." And we walked on. After leaving the house in Rue des Sts. Pères, she suddenly stopped at the second crossing and turned to the right. I felt her hand tremble on my arm; but a moment later, abruptly disengaging it, she rang at No. 7, passage des Sts. Pères. The door opened, and she passed quickly in and ascended a flight of dirty stone stairs, I, of course, following. The janitress, a grim woman about as ancient as the house, nodded a little "good evening" as we passed, and beyond that nothing. Mlle. Leslie kept going up

—one, two, three, four—yes, five flights, before she stopped.

As she stood with her foot on the last step she turned to me, and I was amazed at the expression of her face. It was hard, determined, and pale, while her eyes blazed with a steady flame. She placed her hand on my arm *à la régence*, bidding me wait for her in the passage, at the same time pointing out to me an old chair that stood against the musty wall. She then rapped at a door to the left of the staircase. It opened quickly. A dark-browed young man eagerly seized her hand, and the words, "Ah, darling, thank heaven you have come!" were followed by a hasty embrace as the door closed upon their retreating forms.

Can you imagine my surprise? I think not. Who was the young man? In what relation did she stand toward him? Why a secret visit at night? And why all this mystery? I am no fool, Athol, but you will surely think me one when I tell you that I waited two mortal hours in the vile passage of a sixth floor Parisian tenement—and all for what? To see a beautiful woman throw herself into the arms of a dark young man; to hear half-whispered words of love, with incessant murmurings, coming through the illy closed door, and to find myself getting each moment more desperately interested in a pair of heavenly eyes that beamed from a face the Virgin Mary herself might have envied. I could think of nothing but the strangeness of my position, and, man of the world as I am, I did not yet wholly consider the enormous triviality of my conduct.

Prying into other's secrets is one thing, becoming enamoured of a woman who *has* a secret is another. I was doing the one, I was in a fair way of accomplishing the other—I, who have sworn never to love a woman with a secret!

Love! I was far from being in love, but I was far from feeling wholly indifferent to this girl's fate. I am nearly at the end of this long letter. My two hours ended, she came forth from the chamber, her face tear-stained and pale. "We return to Avenue Matignon," she said, quietly. "You have waited long. Let us go at once."

Impossible to tell you my feelings as we wended our way homeward. The sky was resplendent with stars, the soft night air crept into the carriage, and my lady, a pale, inert figure in her robe of carmelite gray, lay back against the carriage cushions. She never spoke, and I—well, little thought had I of breaking the stillness. She is beautiful, and I am very unhappy. To-morrow she shall know all. I will write, and she can read what I dare not tell her. I feel that she is my fate, and that, innocently or not, I am bound to follow her lead.

* * * * * * * *

What have I written? Of course I shall do nothing of the sort. I have just read over these last lines. Pray forgive me! Quite useless my erasing—it would blot my page, and the words have no earthly value. I say, "I shall write to-morrow." The to-morrow has already passed, and I have not written. Perhaps later I may—mind, I am not sure, but I *may*—indite the explanatory letter. We reached the Avenue

Matignon. She never spoke until just as we left the brougham.

"Good night," said she, "and thanks. Thursday, at the same hour, I shall await you." That was all. I took my last look at her face (for I hope I shall never see her again) and—and—so far this is the end of my adventure. No, I have forgotten something. As she left she turned and asked my name. I was staggered, but quickly gave her the first one that came into my mind, which I prefixed with my own—"François Felden." "And the address? I may need you," "Maurice's Hotel, Rue de Rivoli," I responded, lifting my hat. She stopped short, as if considering how a poor devil of a guide could live in so swell an hotel, then said, "It is well," and vanished. Now, you see, I am quite compromised. Heaven knows how it will all end. I have already taken some precautions. Anything sent to François Felden will be brought to my room. I have explained that he is a confidential servant of the family, and in Paris at present. I am haunted by Miss Leslie's face, but hope I shall have the courage not to go again to the Avenue Matignon. Still, if I should attempt to see her, and the real bearer of the letter in the meantime had turned up! I will simply explain that, being in need of employment, I accepted what a kind fortune threw in my way! The more I think of it, the more I am convinced that I must not disclose my real name, as at this cold-blooded hour (four P.M.) I am amazed at what I have done. Without night's entrancing and mysterious charm, I find that daylight cools my late enthusiasm. Were it always

high noon, not one man in a million would make an ass of himself. It is to be hoped that the order of things will change. I had already a great grudge against night, yet would not for worlds blot yestereen out of existence.

By Jove! do you know what yesterday was? The thirty-first of October, and last night All Hallows' Eve. Surely it was to meet my fate I came to Paris; and although anything but superstitious, I bow to mystic destiny. Pray think of me as belonging to another, for the fact of my adventure having taken place on that date, of all days in the year, knocks all other calculations on the head. No Englishman in his right mind could deliberately ignore the most potent of all legends in the Scottish calendar. The hardest heart softens in memory of delightful moments passed waiting to see your "future fate" on the cellar stairs, or groping about an unfrequented portrait gallery with a lighted candle your companion, and a hand-mirror the sole sharer of the secret. My "future fate" has been seen in my late adventure. The cellar stairs had a decided upward, instead of a downward, tendency—five flights, each one harder to climb than the other. But let me leave the subject, otherwise I shall recapitulate the whole, and even your great patience might rebel. Bell has just told Lanesborough that he will "see if I am at home." For pure asinine qualities recommend to me the ordinary valet. Of all things, to be disturbed at this moment! However, I suppose I *must* see him. To-morrow I shall write you again, but do not think (even if the idea come into your

mind) to dissuade me from seeing the legitimate end of my adventure. This is the first of November, 1876, and I met my fate last night—All Hallows' Eve, the thirty-first of October. Not a word to any one of this ; above all, do not let my lady mother know I have written.

Always the same,

BEAUFORT.

CHAPTER III.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

November 4th—midnight.

I returned from Rue des Sts. Pères two hours since, so you see that I have followed my first and ultimate inspiration. I went at the usual hour to the house and was told to call at eight instead. Punctual to the moment I found myself ringing at the *entresol*. The same lizard opened the door. I was shown into the identical boudoir, and at the pretty table sat the lady. Nothing was changed. She was dressed in gray as before, letters and papers were still strewn about, and it was with difficulty that I could imagine my adventure to be forty-eight hours old. She greeted me with simple grace, and looking up said with an irresistible smile:

"I have a favor to ask. Would you mind not wearing glasses? I have a fancy to always see the eyes of those who are about me."

Could any request have been more startling? Impossible to dispense with them—she would surely recognize me in future (for I now intend to be presented in my proper position). Yet, what excuse to make? Putting on a bold front, I said:

"I don't mind taking them off now and then, but in

my last Swiss expedition [I haven't seen Chamounix for years] the glare of the glaciers weakened my eyes, and the period ordered for wearing dark glasses expires in a month. I could [regretfully] do without them if you think I must, but it might undo all that has been done. Eyesight is so delicate a thing I——" But in spite of stammering I commenced taking them off. She looked up and said apologetically :

"Don't think of it ; I did not imagine the cause for wearing them to be so serious. It is foolish, perhaps, but I always fancy that people wear dark glasses only when they wish to disguise themselves." I started : she continued—"although in your case I might have known better. Shall we go ?" rising. I took off the horrid lunettes, and, as if to give countenance to my story, the sudden change from dark to light caused a nervous movement, which she noticed. I faintly attempted to shade my eyes with my hand ; she expostulated : "Put them back directly ; no one should suffer for a caprice of mine," and she arose.

It seems useless telling you of the drive to Rue des Sts. Pères, still I cannot forbear. As the first time, we passed the Place de la Concorde, we turned into Quai des Tuileries, and bowled along the Seine. The night has been lovely. Rarely does one see such weather in Paris. Of course St. Martin's summer is the finest season of the year ; but can one call this St. Martin's ? You know I am not a very talkative person, still, can you imagine me playing a silent rôle ? Can you realize that not only do I not open my mouth unless I am spoken to, but that I

have discovered that rarer phenomenon—a young woman completely wrapped up in herself, unconscious of her beauty, and as silent almost as if dumb? I thought she might ask some question, make some trifling remark about the weather, extend her confidences a little further, perhaps; but no! she places herself in a corner of the carriage, holding her papers fast in her slender hands; and her face is an almost impenetrable mask—a beautiful mask with lovely eyes peering straight into the night, and the expression habitual to it one of such profound melancholy and sadness that I am touched in spite of myself. Once she leaned forward, as we neared the bridge Henri Quatre, and these words half-escaped her lips:

"How grand is Notre Dame, with its wondrous towers and massive façade, and how beautiful is all this part of Paris! I love it." I responded quickly:

"Yes one can scarcely understand the general mania to live in the new quarter, near the Arc du Triomphe. It is also beautiful; but this is historical Paris, and dear to the student's heart."

She looked at me in amazement. Forgetting my position, I had spoken quite naturally as a man of the world would talk with a well-bred woman, and my assurance could not but have astonished her. I also spoke in English, and seemed to follow her thoughts with extraordinary celerity. Hoping she would not make any further remarks, I gathered as much *sang froid* as possible, and carelessly stared out of the window. She had curiosity enough to ask me how I happened to speak English so well, at the same time gravely ignoring my lack of respect in

daring to respond to her half-uttered thoughts. I said:

"My mother was English, but I have been brought up on the continent, and a great traveller all my life. I suppose I speak English fairly, although I prefer *German* or French." She nodded, as if to indicate that the conversation was at an end, and settled back into the old quietness. I should say that we always speak in French, and that her accent is marvellously good. Where could she have acquired it, I wonder? I know, I feel, that she is an American. We finally reached Rue des Sts. Pères, and the same thing was gone through with as on the previous visit. We said "good evening" to the *concierge;* we mounted the five flights of mouldy stairs; she entered the mystic chamber, and I, her paid companion, waited outside, seated in the old chair. Now you shall know all I thought about during my time of waiting.

That she is a lady, I cannot doubt; that she is unfortunate, I am sure of; and also that a great mystery envelops her strange proceedings. Her house and *entourage* indicate great wealth. Her dress, although simple, is of the finest material. On her left hand blaze jewels that she wears with natural grace, and her manners not even my own lady mother could find fault with. While counting the passing moments, I decided that I must know more of her; and knowing more of her, naturally I shall get at the bottom of the mystery. You know me too well to think for a moment that I could be actuated solely by the last idea. She is so young, so beautiful, and so seemingly alone,

that I longed to tear off my mask and offer to help her, if I could, or, at least, in some way to share her burden. I am now convinced that she bears a secret load, and a heavy one. She is not bad—she cannot be; and yet meeting a young man alone, in his chamber, at night. I must ignore that part of my thoughts as something unworthy and quite beneath a gentleman. Still I could not help thinking. I must know her; but how to be introduced—how and in what way? I can only think of the Embassy as usual, and to find my way to the American Legation is the next move. I shall leave Maurice's to-morrow and take chambers or a small house; then I can continue in safety my new rôle. Bell looked astonished that I did not dress this evening; but beyond the knowledge that his voice in quality is a light baritone I do not think I shall ever go. I have done with talkative valets. An idea! Do you know any one who has the acquaintance of the American Minister in Paris? He is so distinguished a man that I might naturally wish to make his acquaintance. I could go to his receptions, and might meet Miss Leslie. Yes, that is the thing. Do, like a good fellow, find out at once, and send me a letter of presentation by the next post. If you knew how anxious I am to know her, and to see how she appears in the world, you would fly to aid my effort. Don't ask how I shall keep her from suspecting who Felden is. It is impossible that she should ever discover anything in common between her confidential attendant and an English gentleman. But supposing that she does not go in society? That is quite im-

possible. Few women would hide so pretty a face under a bushel; and few women have griefs poignant and deep-seated enough to hinder their liking admiration, and seeking it wherever it may be found.

She came out of the attic chamber, and the tear-stained face of last Tuesday was to-night perfectly calm. Motioning to me that she was ready to start, without speaking we descended the stairs. The night was so maliciously seductive that I longed to steal her away and off to the Bois de Boulogne. Going there at this hour is one of my passions. The drive toward the Arc du Triomphe, the hundreds of carriages with lovers and lanterns, the soft charm of moonlight and starry skies, are to me the most potent of the seductions of this gay capital. With the woman one loves—bah! how fast I am going. "With the woman one loves," indeed! It certainly would be difficult for me to find the woman I love, unless in imagination. I swear to you it is not Miss Leslie; I am interested in her, that is all; and I am so much interested that I think going to the end of this adventure will cure me completely of a passing fancy. By going to the end—you know what I must mean—I am sure to discover, sooner or later, some quality quite incompatible with what I exact in a lady, and the day of said discovery will be the death-warrant to my unreasonable interest and curiosity. I can see her now coolly leaning back in her brougham. I might be a stone for all she occupies herself with my presence. To be sure, ladies do not keep up a running conversation with their attendants, but once

in a while some little word might break the ice. Longing to be my true self, still thinking wildly of carrying her off to the Bois, I trembled. I could not be near so much beauty unmoved. The idea that I might touch something belonging to her—perhaps a fold of her soft dress—sent a thrill of electric fire through my veins, and I madly wished that the horses might run away, a collision would upset the carriage, that anything, in fact, might happen, to disturb her wondrous nonchalance; so that, even unwillingly, she might outstretch her arm and place her slender hand on mine. Then I would feel her quite near me. I would take her to my heart, confess the deception I had practised, ask her to forgive the dual part I had played and to accept as all her own the life that, without her smile, would be worthless. All this I thought of.

Such was the maddening influence of finding myself alone with this beautiful young creature at night. Well might I tremble. The colder she was the more ardently I loved her. The more statuesque her face the more I longed to see it vivified with the light of love. The quiet expression in her eyes becomes transformed, through the medium of my passion, into a fountain whose liquid depths reflected only amorous lights. Perhaps this might become real in time. I will set myself to win this woman; I care naught for her past, I laugh at the future, I only wish for the present. If she be free she shall be mine; if not, I shall fly Paris and her presence.

That this fatal charming presence, which makes me forget my manhood, my pride of birth and sta-

tion—than which, heretofore, nothing in this world was held so dear—that a pale form in nunlike garb can inthrall my senses, is, to me, so wonderful that I cannot yet realize it. Yet I do realize it and know exactly why. Pale and nunlike are words that only reveal instead of disguising her beauty. She——no, I cannot now describe her to you; to-morrow, perhaps. To-morrow my imagination will be less heated. Out of her sight I shall be my own old self, and delivered from the influence of this personal fascination, I may recover some of my usual tranquillity of spirit. It must be the night, or, perhaps, have I quaffed too deeply of the generous vine? No! Bacchus rarely rules supreme at a hasty dinner; and, if I remember rightly, this evening's repast was meagre and unsatisfactory. At supper, then, I will remedy the slight to our favorite god. I dare not read this letter—I would be sure to put it into the waste-basket; yet I do not know. You are my dearest friend, my old and only confidant, and I have written just as my heart dictated.

Where was I in the recital? Ah! looking at my cold companion, with the moonlight streaming in on her face, and the carriage rumbling as monotonously as ever. Well, while looking at her refined beauty she suddenly let her eyes fall on my face. Without knowing why, I remembered that I was her paid companion, certainly in intrigue, perhaps in crime, and the distaste that any honest man might feel at finding himself, for the first time, in an equivocal position took possession of me to such a degree that

I longed to see the end of our drive. Perhaps a dread warning of the power such a woman would hold over me cast its shadow over my soul. Then and there I struggled with myself, and the result was a momentary calm.

Arrived home she stepped daintily out of her carriage as before ; said "good night" in the old measured tones, and "adieu until Monday ;" then I turned away. In her haste she had dropped something. It was her handkerchief, a morsel of linen and lace. I snatched it quickly. It lies beside me as I write. I do not think I shall send it back. Its loss may spoil the dozen ; its gain to me is one chance in a million. There is an odor clinging to it that is delicate and sensuous. It seems to me that in my lifetime I have already inhaled this odor. But where, and when ? Ah ! I recollect. The first time I saw her in the boudoir of Avenue Matignon, when she took up her papers and letters, I noticed the fragrance that exhaled at her touch. I must find out what it is and, henceforth, none other shall ever perfume my life. Heavens, how late it is ! I have been writing furiously, but, in spite of me, time has flown. I shall now sit down and drown this evening's emotions in my favorite Widow Clicquot. I have just found a note from Allani. He has arrived in Paris from America and invites me to sup with him to-night at the Imperial. If not, breakfast to-morrow at Voisin's. I accept the *déjeuner*. To-night I sup, but alone. In fancy there are three places at the table. The first is mine, the second is occupied by a hand-

kerchief, and the third, or first, enthrones my ideal woman. Good night, and God bless you. Write me directly if you have not already done so. I ought to have a letter to-morrow.

Always the same,

BEAUFORT.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

November 9th.

My Dear Athol:

I almost wish you hadn't written. What kind of a friend do you fancy yourself? For fear you may not recollect the contents of your letter, I will quote it in toto, omitting, however, the flattering appellation, which commences it:

"Your rushing off to Paris at this time was incomprehensible. At the different houses, where you had promised to visit, you have given your best friends the go-by, and what we thought a simple caprice, will culminate in some irremediable folly. In Heaven's name, what can come of your knowing this woman! I procure you a letter of presentation, indeed! rather would I give up my next year's rents—and money has some value for me still. Your fair blonde—I presume she is a blonde (Eve was, also)—is an adventuress. All that idea of a friend in distress in the Latin Quarter is a trumped-up affair, to have its weight with some one—not you. She does not know you, but servants talk, and to the one who sent her a confidential guide, she hopes Felden will naturally relate all that takes place, with a glowing

description of her tear-stained face, resigned, angelic character, etc., etc. I cannot imagine how you, who have travelled the wide world over, who can choose between a duchess and a courtesan to either tie you down for life, or amuse you, could for one moment so far forget yourself as to play such a part! It did well enough for the first night, but after that! my dear cousin, realize what you are doing. If she be an honest woman, you have no right to pry into her secrets. Even honest families sometimes have skeletons in their closets, and to please you, she shall have the benefit of the doubt; but, if she be what I could almost swear she is, then are you running into positive danger, and these nightly escapades must be stopped. The first you know you will be heels over head in love, and then, beware. All that you have ever made any woman suffer will be avenged upon your own head, by your own hand. The one you love has a secret, a mysterious attachment, liaison, probably; she will never care for you, and if you continue caring for her, you will resort to subterfuge, deception, and perhaps even worse. I know your character so well! Although but a few years older than yourself, my life has been one long experience in reading human nature. You have good stuff in you, the makings of an honest man, and a heart capable of endless affection. Shall I read your horoscope? Well; if you will:

"If you really interest yourself in this woman, like Marc Antony for another Cleopatra, you would consider a world well lost for her sake. From the tone of your confidence, I see a gleam of hope that you are not yet wholly in her power; but, if you have deceived me, and things have gone further than I trust, then, alas! you will reap much sorrow in their undoing! Many a man, at the beginning of life, for one fair face, has watched the sun set forever on hope, and the years drag on in a misery that no fu-

ture could ever mitigate. Tell me that you have been thoughtless, curious, what you will; but write me that this farce is ended. I have so often heard you say, 'I would commit no matter what *bassesse* for the woman I love.' Pray Heaven you only said, but were far from really meaning it. Forgive my plain speaking; but who, since your father's death, has cared for you as I have? I who had humored your every caprice, who intercedes with your lady mother when the maternal pride is ruffled by some thoughtlessness on your part; and who, in all this world has your welfare more sincerely at heart than I? I have reread your letters, and alas, cannot look upon them in the light of a practical joke. Hazard plays strange tricks with us mortals; and even the great Shakespeare did well to bow before "the divinity that shapes our ends." In this case, the hand of a divinity is doubtful; and the end thus far attained roughhewn enough to startle me.

"As to All-Hallow Eve, that is pure rot, although the superstition be a popular one. But rather than hurt your credulity, I will even allow that it was strange such a thing should happen the night of the thirty-first of October. It would have appeared quite as strange the thirty-first of November, or the thirty-first of May, and the thirty-first of August. Putting aside the legendary thirty-first, the same thing happening on any night of no particular date, would have been a curious coincidence, and only your following it up, places it in the light of a strange adventure. I beg of you to accept the distraction thrown in your way by charming fate the first night of your stay in Paris. Send the lady a letter announcing the necessary departure of Felden; and if you will not come back to the castle, at least send for your dear mother, sister, and myself to keep you company in that gay vortex of pleasure, called 'The City of the World.'"

This, my dear Athol, is your letter almost in its entirety. I had thought the way in which I expressed myself with regard to a certain person could give no man the right to speak harshly of her. Miss Leslie *is* a lady, and if even one word of mine has led you to think lightly of her, I beg to retract it. I have been sadly distraught since meeting her and writing to you ; and have always followed the exact course of my thoughts. In thus communing with a dear friend I have been honest as with myself. I have told you everything as it was, and all that has happened. Neither more nor less. You may believe me. It is not to my own kinsman that I should utter my first lie, and when I told you that I was only *interested* in her, I told the truth. I now say that I am more deeply concerned than ever in her welfare, and shall do all in my power to be presented to her in the right way. If love follows my imprudence, love it shall be. I have but one life to live, and at five and twenty I realize that knocking about and seeing the world in its every guise cannot take the place of a true and sincere affection. I have always said that men and women should never drive from their hearts an honest love. One such must purify the inner man ; and I welcome with gladness the hope that I shall know that most divine of all mortal experiences. She may be unworthy ; but my love will be sincere. How often in the history of the world have men loved where they could not esteem, and women adored where they could no longer respect? I shall be brave enough if I find that our lives must lie apart, to never see

her, but, alas! I fear that I should never cease to love her. Perhaps, my ideal woman, with the only part of her that cannot be untrue, her face, shall be my life's companion. At present, it is easy for me to speak thus.

Nothing on earth could convince me that I am interested in an adventuress; and I would stake my soul on the purity and truthfulness of Miss Leslie. That there is a mystery in her life I cannot doubt; but that she is aught than the best and loveliest of God's creatures I will never willingly believe. I forgive the tone of your letter, but I shall not return to London; and at present care little to see my mother and sister, but as to you yourself why not come here if you will, and as I am determined to know her, you shall judge if such a face can mask a bad heart.

Ever the same,

BEAUFORT.

CHAPTER V.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

November 11th.

DEAR ATHOL.

Can you imagine what has happened? Allani called by chance, and took me to the American Legation. I was introduced to the American Minister, a charming man, and am already invited to next Tuesday's reception. Allani is a capital fellow, and has told me all about his travels in America. He insists that I shall go there this winter or next summer. I cannot tell you how he is changed, and for the better. He gives such glowing pictures of the New World that I am half tempted to go. I shall then see *her* country. Of course, you understand my pleasure at the prospect of next Tuesday's "soirée." She will be present; I shall be introduced; and will find out all about my incognita. She is too beautiful to pass unnoticed in the world, and I will venture to say that any one in society can tell me all about her. It is because I have not frequented the American resorts in Paris that I am not already *au fait de tout.* I consider my life half thrown away, and all my previous visits to this adorable city completely null. Let us hasten to repair our fault.

In view of what I have undertaken, I found it necessary to quit Meurice's. The Duc de Dethune, Rue de Bassano, has a jolly little hotel that he rarely inhabits. Arthur has rented it for me, and I am already installed. In fact, I am writing this letter in a quaint little room, with the rusty portrait of a certain Duchess de Dethune smiling down upon me from her carved frame. She does not disturb me in the least. These eyes on canvass that follow one about wherever one goes, may reflect great credit on the painter's art, but I never feel in the slightest degree uncomfortable in their presence. Ah! what a thing is a clear conscience! I presume you would like to know some of the gossip circulating in Paris. I am sorry to say that my stock is exceedingly limited. Beyond the fact that "Owen Meredith" received great literary stars, and his Excellency, the British Ambassador, was a very great favorite, I can scarcely go. The usual squabbles are going on between the MacMahonites and the Legitimists; and the Duke de Magenta is strongly suspected of Bonapartist proclivities. Poor Mr. Thiers, ex-President, passes his time one scarcely knows how. I saw him yesterday in his coupé, drawn up in the corner like an ancient mummy. Have you been here since the war? Of course, yes; what am I thinking of? we were here together. Can one realize, upon weighing the exact avoirdupois of this nation, what its real character is worth?

In looking around I see lamentable landmarks of the recent conflict; but, from the désinvolture of the people themselves, I should never imagine that they

had known the recent horrors of a great war. Taking them all in all, I think the French a nation to admire. The people are thrifty ; the most careless will still think of turning the penny—let us say, an honest, rather than a dishonest one ; while the war debt, though so enormous, will enrich Germany, but will never impoverish France. It will be paid—"all hands to the wheel"—with as much gaiety as a workman dances at his wedding breakfast. They consider it as something to be done, a loss for the moment, but entailing no serious consequences. I think we have too long held our neighbors in disdain. We are wrong. They present a smiling front to the stranger within their gates ; look upon a national misfortune as a family skeleton, to be closeted at home, but not to be exhibited abroad. They never appeared to me a serious race ; no one ever doubted their wits, philosophers or poets ; but the world has doubted, and with some apparent reason, their stability as a nation. Being English, and naturally the quintessence of egotism, I am charmed to find so much *légèreté* in so near a vicinity, and as I usually come to Paris to get rid of the spleen, I am delighted to find the city its own old gay self. Why should I refer to, or even think of, their war, when to the veriest Parisian the winter of '70-71 might have belonged to any time B.C., or still better, represented the sufferings of those supposed poor people who traversed the Red Sea, on what they now believe to have been a pleasure trip. They take the world as it comes, so will I. They bear their cares lightly, so will I. Everything is treated with the same frothy, delightful indiffer-

ence which may well afford an example to even "Perfidious Albion."

The Tuileries are in ruin. I remarked (wishing to be sympathetic) to a Frenchman, that the ruins little resembled the beautiful palace when twinkling feet hid the mosaics of the tessellated floor, and the light and beauty of Parisian society honored the caprice of an Empress, or the beck of a Bonaparte, who little resembled Canova's ideal. He looked at me wonderingly, then answered in good faith, with the inevitable shrug of the shoulders:

"The Tuileries? Ah, yes! It was a beautiful palace. It is now a beautiful ruin. What can you expect? We admire all that is beautiful—to admire the ruin you cannot also have the palace!"

The civilized Frenchman knows no regret. Yesterday is 'past,' to-morrow not yet come; the only fact that stares him in the face, an indubitable to-day! So proud is he that he will not even mourn over his losses, and so malicious that he makes light of all misfortunes. I, even I, a stolid Briton, can never think of the burning of such a city as this as otherwise than a universal calamity. The destruction of any work of art is a loss to humanity. The destruction of such buildings as the Tuileries, the Hotel de Ville, and numerous others equally well known, is an irreparable disaster. The valuable paintings, books, and historic souvenirs, whose contemplation gave nations pleasure, lie in annihilation, trodden under foot among neglected ash-heaps, and powdered along the Parisian Boulevards.

This letter must stop. Its tone is regretful, and

I have already told you that what is past is past, but what is to be—must be. I know what I wish to happen: it is that to-morrow's post will bring me a letter from England; that I might close my eyes now to awake Monday night in presence of my ideal; and that Tuesday I shall have the pleasure of making my finest bow. Placing my crush-hat over the region of my heart, I will diligently study one figure in the rich Aubusson; my foot will involuntarily take the "first position" requisite in the ordinary salutation; my voice will murmur indifferently: "Charmed to make your acquaintance!" but it will beat like a sledge-hammer, and I shall return to Rue Bassano the happiest man in existence. The happiest, and your ever affectionate kinsman,

BEAUFORT.

CHAPTER VI.

ATHOL BRANDON TO LORD BEAUFORT.

November 12th.

My Dear Francis :

I fear expostulation would be in vain. Your letters are certainly interesting ; and I do not know but what you will do well to follow the inclination of your (excuse my smile)—heart. I never before knew you to be so determined on having your own way ; and as such is the case, why, what can one do but look on and hope for early disenchantment and a hopeful end. I thought you wrote like a madman ; I begin to realize that you wrote, instead, like an Englishman. Perhaps you did not think I would take you at your word, and accept your kind invitation to come to Paris? I leave to-morrow morning in the tidal train, and if nothing better offers, pray come to meet me at the station. I suppose we will get in about five ; however, you can easily ascertain the exact hour, and will do me a tremendous favor by putting in an appearance about that time. Your lady mother quite favors my joining you, and her pleasure at not leaving you alone in a city so rank with temptation, quite obliterated her curiosity at my sudden departure. Lady Beaufort is an angel, and your little sister, Alice, a second Madonna. With a home like yours, how you can have the heart to

ramble all over creation passes my comprehension. However, let us hope that your travels are ended for a time.

It is something to know that Paris pleases you. Paris is near home, and the sight of even a postage stamp with a Republican goddess instead of some Palestine disfiguration is a welcome change. Wire me if you wish anything from London. No, it would be too late. I shall be *en route* when you receive this. My dear boy, all this may seem trivial, and so it is. I am more deeply interested than you think. I am almost alarmed at your strange infatuation, and I can only ponder on what you have told me. You are five and twenty, but one would never imagine it from the knowledge of this last week's manœuvres. It sounds like one of your college escapades. I will say no more, or you will greet me coldly. Whatever happens, let nothing come between us. Certainly, no strange woman with a pallid face should in one week so fill your heart and mind that no place is left for your own nearest and dearest! Good-by and Heaven bless you!

Always your affectionate

ATHOL.

Lord Beaufort sighed as he read the letter. In the last few words, he realized that we retain our allegiance to home affections until we meet the one soul kindred with our own. When that moment comes, farewell simple joys and the dear maternal servitude. The home of our youth becomes a house of bondage. Father, mother, sisters, brothers, are a secondary consideration; and the face, whose features are perhaps but twenty-four hours old, is the only one whose lineaments are indelibly stamped

upon our hearts. Parents must expect this. Longfellow has said, "There are no birds in last year's nest." The words are poetic and truthful. When the young ones fly to find themselves newer habitations, farewell to the ancient boughs that sheltered them; farewell to the nest where the mother-bird so daintily hovered while caring for her young.

Lord Beaufort was an only son, descended from a long-lined ancestry. Beaufort lands and castle, in fair Devonshire, were the envy of many an ancient house. The country for miles around smiled on his broad acres and thrifty fields. The Beauforts, father and son, for more than five centuries, had ruled supreme in their grand old domain. The last lord, Earl of Brandon, and father to the present earl, died in 1872, leaving a wife and two children; all his rich inheritance going to his only son, Francis. The house was in reality a feudal castle. It was built in pure Italian renaissance, with two square towers at either end, around whose top ran a superb terrace.

Fair indeed was the domain of Beaufort; and at five and twenty Lord Francis found himself the possessor of a castle and landed property that few noblemen, even the richest, could boast. His youth had been passed at Cambridge. Graduating with honor at an exceptionally early age, he had spent the time until his majority travelling with his cousin. The cousin was Athol Brandon, the only child of Lord Beaufort's sister, and the loved companion of the young heir. A few years Beaufort's senior, he was in person a fine contrast to Francis, but ready

to join him in anything, so nearly were they mated in sympathy and habit. They had travelled after his coming of age, and only the sudden demise of Mrs. Brandon had separated them. Athol was called home, and Francis continued his travels alone. In 1872 his father's illness recalled the wanderer; but alas! the seeds of gentlemanly vagrancy were already sown, and hard was it to the enthusiastic traveller to settle down on the paternal estate.

The eleventh Earl of Beaufort, after a flattering convalescence, died suddenly in relapse, and his son Francis, the present earl, found himself heir to all the broad acres of his father's domain, and head of the house of Beaufort. His mother, *née* the Lady Helen Vane, had been a fond wife and loving parent. In the second year of wedded life the heir was born, and fifteen years later a second child, a tiny baby-girl with blue eyes and flaxen hair. She was named Alice after a maternal great-aunt, as she had none of the lineaments of the Brandons. A strange little waif who was spoiled by brother Francis, adored by mamma and papa, who ruled in the house and tyrannized on the estate.

After the Earl's death, the Countess closed the castle, and spent a year with her parents at Vane Manor, a magnificent property in Yorkshire. The winter of 1873 was spent in Rome, Naples, and Florence; the next two seasons in London, in quiet, however; the two following winters in Algiers, for the health of little Alice; and from that time until the October of 1876, Francis Beaufort had done little else but travel.

In September Beaufort Castle had been opened to intimate friends, but after five weeks of staying at home, Lord Beaufort was already anxious for change. He would run over to Paris for a week; after a few days in Brighton, to Paris he went. There we find him, for the first time in his life, with a definite object in view. At least he thought himself desperately interested and half in love. An adorer of beauty, he had found his ideal woman. Lord Francis was essentially English. He had not arrived at his time of life without having followed in the footsteps of the other noblemen of his time. His scholarly tastes were just pronounced enough to permit him the enjoyment, in a very full sense, of this world's pleasures and pastimes. He might play at the club half the night, consume two-thirds of a bottle of kirchenwasser; but a return home in the dawn found his senses alert, and, instead of a bacchanalian refrain, some tender operatic fragment would more likely escape his lips. He loved nature and out-door sport, but hunting, fishing, rowing, and driving were not to him the sum total of existence. A beautiful, chivalrous appreciation of men and women was the greatest legacy handed down to him by his ancestors. Although he had seen much to disgust him, he had also seen much to admire. He was in one sense very un-English, as he had a tendency towards optimism. At five and twenty one can be optimist, but at this age, and an Englishman who has lived, it is a very difficult thing to be.

Lord Beaufort had learned that most essential of

all the lessons taught Britannia's sons and daughters: To pretend indifference; to be perfectly cold and undemonstrative; to pass for an egotist—always gentlemanly, but always distant; to be thought worldly and calculating; in fact to be recognized and considered English. This outward varnish was accepted as genuine in the eyes of the world, but it could not hide his real nature from his friends, nor the enthusiasm that carried him away when thinking of Miss Leslie, and writing to his well-loved kinsman. With the pride natural to a gentleman, and the calmness that distinguishes his nation, without any seeming display, he attained quietly and deliberately the end sought. He was determined to find out who Miss Leslie was; he was willing to do it at the cost, if necessary, of his life's happiness.

What he exacted he would give. He would give all without stint, and he would know the one woman who had such charm, and such power to charm. Never in his life before had he met such individual loveliness; but under what circumstances? Here the good in his nature showed itself. The beautiful must be true, for nature rarely misses her handimark; but it needed much persuasion to satisfy a straightforward man that a woman with a secret was, in nine chances in ten, no matter how beautiful, a woman to be avoided. Beaufort *père* would never have reasoned: he would have left Paris. Beaufort *fils* not only courted mystery and fascination, but he remained in the city; and, in order to miss none of his habitual comforts, quietly established himself in an *hôtel*, as they call French private houses in France. A bit of a place after

the castle; but home, and like most people, Beaufort liked comfort at the proper time. He hated hotels, he could never accustom himself to the espionage of continental servants, and when his mind was made up to resume his proper character after serving with Miss Leslie, he was willing to live in two rooms, if necessary, but by himself.

CHAPTER VII.

PORTRAITS OF THE YOUNG MEN.

THE tidal train from Boulogne was just puffing into the Northern Station. Beaufort, with a special carte, had been allowed to pass the mysterious grating dividing the inner from the outer platform, and stood waiting the arrival of his cousin. In a moment he spied his blond head in one of the carriage windows, and in two seconds later he was shaking his outstretched hand.

"Dear old boy," said Brandon, affectionately, "how jolly of you to meet me! How well you look, and how glad I am to see you!"

Beaufort smiled, and said:

"Are you quite sure, after——"

Brandon grew serious, but responded heartily: "Of course I am, 'after'—'after' what? Ah! I see: you wish to take the bull——"

"Would you mind saying that in French?" said Beaufort, half maliciously. "It sounds less brutal."

"No," said his cousin, sturdily. "I am not afraid, now or ever, of the sound of good Anglo-Saxon; and I repeat, you seem to want to take the——"

"This way for the baggage!" screamed the guard. "*On va ouvrir la salle tout de suite.*"

"Curse these frog-eaters!" said Brandon, interrupted in the midst of his phrase. "They make more fuss over the arrival of ten people than we would in London over a series of excursion trains, all going and coming at once at Euston Station. Their yells are deafening, and about what?"

Beaufort laughed. "All in honor of your arrival," said he, gaily. "But what about luggage? Have you brought any?"

Athol placed his hand on his shoulder and said, quietly: "Have I brought any? My dear Francis, I have come to stay until you turn me out. Am I welcome?"

Lord Beaufort reddened, but said quickly: "You are always welcome, and this time the only person in the world that I cared to see."

Brandon looked pleased. Just then the great doors were opened, and rows of luggage were seen piled on the long benches or tables.

One of the nuisances of continental travelling is the custom-house. Waked up in the dead of night, at any hour, one is dragged forth, perhaps in the pouring rain, to follow some garnished official, who finishes by asking in a cracked voice, after going to the bottom of even Flora McFlimsey's trunks, "If you have any tobacco, cigarettes, cigars, spirits or perfume to declare."

The fiend knows perfectly well that you haven't, but he must do his duty. Coming into Paris is less disagreeable than going from there, for instance into Belgium, Holland, or Germany.

A smoky waiting-room, where the combined odors

of not overclean travellers greet your nostrils, is the room into which one is shown while awaiting the distribution of the baggage. If one survives this, and "*luttes et tu vaincras*," one is regaled later on with the sight of a pair of garlic-smelling, puffy paws rummaging about one's linen. After things are generally disarranged, one of the green-coated officials says in stentorian tones:

"Put things back again and shut the boxes." This is in order to save himself the trouble. He will probably have the cheek to interpolate a frigid smile with the words:

"Madame or Monsieur can do it better than I. He knows where his own belongs."

It is heartrending to witness the disrespect shown voyagers when they have passed from beneath the Union Jack. One country is scarcely worse than another, although the most disagreeable custom-houses are those of the provinces, where the distances are short, the people poor, and the employés dirty and diligent.

In large cities one can well afford waiting and a little extra inconvenience. The voyage is usually at an end, and one cannot only repose the tired body but rearrange the disordered luggage. The sensible traveller picks out a commissioner (if he has no valet), throws him his keys and some silver, and saying, "Who breaks the trunks pays; but bring the *débris* to such a place," is off like a shot; and nine chances in ten his luggage will follow him in good condition.

Athol and Beaufort were just looking up the Eng-

lish sole-leathers when Beaufort recollected that Bell was somewhere about.

"We are both idiots," said he, tranquilly. "Give him your keys and we will leave this."

Brandon handed him a small *trousseau*, and selecting those necessary for the boxes, the two cousins strolled out of the great exit. An open victoria, with a capital pair, stood waiting. Beaufort and his companion jumped in, and lighting cigars were soon at their ease. I say "at their ease." *One* was at his ease, the other scarcely. He need not have had any fear, however, as Brandon had not the slightest intention of referring to anything that had passed in their correspondence. He was quite the Athol that Beaufort had left in London, gay, frank, good-humored, and loyal.

In person he was the typical Englishman. Fair hair, with blue-gray eyes, bronzed skin, and as handsome a man as one would meet of a morning in the Row. He was very slight, however, and gave one the idea that his health left something to desire. He wore a moustache, but no beard. His brows were heavy and dark; his lashes curiously curled up instead of down, and placed the gray eyes in tantalizing shadow. The expression of his countenance was politely cold; his voice was hearty and reassuring, quite in contrast with his face, but in spite of its sincerity sometimes suggested that he was not in earnest. He was a thoroughly well-bred young man and distinguished, as are tens of thousands of England's youth.

His cousin Francis was almost his opposite in per-

sonal appearance. He had fine, clear-cut features, an extremely pale face, and beautiful mouth, which, when he speaks, discloses teeth even and white as pearls. A soft, mild expression is his characteristic one, except when in conversation. Then the pallor grows clearer and a faint dash of color breaks into the cheeks. The eyes, strange to say, are truly Spanish —deep gray, large, and velvety. The lashes are long and black, and when the Earl looks down they throw a heavy shadow on his cheeks. The eyebrows are finely arched, and the forehead denotes intelligence and great thoughtfulness. The hair is bluish-black and has just the slightest perceptible wave in it. He wears it cut very closely, but occasionally a lock strays over his temple with careless grace. His head is simply beautiful, and he carries it with royal dignity and hauteur. His form is slight and his carriage extremely easy and graceful. While speaking he is usually energetic and impassioned. His voice, sweet and clear, rings with an enthusiasm that belongs to his years. An earnest, cultivated young man, he charms all who come in contact with him.

Personal beauty in man or woman is a gift. The art of pleasing is perhaps a more dangerous charm, and Lord Francis possessed both in an unusual degree.

Lord Beaufort felt anything but gay, but by a supreme effort tried to appear at least indifferent. The young men, by some happy combination, found themselves discussing the breakfast at Voisin's, who was in the city, and the latest scandal—a grand duke who had stolen his mother's diamonds, and a frail

American who had the bad taste to wear them. Finally, Beaufort said:

"My dear Athol, have you no curiosity as to where we dine?"

Brandon smiled. "Curiosity," he added, "and an appetite that will honor your *menu* wherever it be cooked."

"You are confiding," said my lord gaily, "and evidently hungry; but console yourself. We dine at the Café Anglais—not *tête-à-tête*, as you might have supposed. I have asked Lanesborough and Allani to join us because I had previously asked them to keep me company at dinner this evening. It would perhaps have put them out to make other arrangements; hence I counted on your friendliness and acquiescence."

Brandon said quickly: "Quite right, my dear fellow, and the idea of the Café Anglais could not have been bettered. I shall do undoubted honor to both cellar and kitchen." To himself he thought: "This is a *ruse*. He asked them to dine, not on account of a previous engagement, but because he feared a *tête-à-tête* with me. He has not the courage to defend himself at six o'clock, but he will have plenty after dinner. In truth, this is a miserable hour, and one that tells upon the stoutest heart." Aloud he added:

"What do you say to an absinthe at the Neapolitan? In the midst of the ancient band of decorated topers that usually congregate at this hour, no one will remark two solitary Englishmen."

"Good!" responded Beaufort, "provided we are

not taken for two deserters from the 'Cook's tourists.' I am agreed," and they drove to the famous café.

It was just the hour when the "band" was in force, and what a sight! The habit of drink may be a disputable one, but that of drinking absinthe is indisputable. The pale green liquor that tastes like simple paragoric is a demon than which any other intoxicant is but the phantom. It drags brain and body to destruction, it breaks up homes, it ruins nations under the seductive guise of "giving one an appetite." The daily habit once formed of taking even the smallest quantity before a repast, in a short time becomes one's bond-master. Even the dread *hasheesh* is less inexorable, while opium-eating becomes a secondary vice. One can break off from either of these because one *fears* the consequences. Absinthe is so seemingly harmless that one never realizes the vital hold that it gains. In an incredibly short time one has the habit of taking a little before dinner. To-morrow it is forgotten, a second perhaps, and the victim does not miss it. He is so well without it that the idea of his ever becoming an absinthe drinker is ridiculous. Parisians get into this habit for the reason that it assists them to pass their time, get up an appetite, and furnishes an excuse for sitting out on their adorable boulevards to watch the endless number of *demi-mondaines* who pass incessantly.

Most people have resort to anodynes to relieve suffering. The thousands of victims to morphine, opium, and the like, all began by silencing some obstinate pain with the requisite dose. The persis-

tent return of the suffering claimed a double portion for the morrow. The benefit of these narcotics is a divine consolation in incurable maladies, and the excuse of their continuous employment, even after the patient is cured, is admissible while dangerous; but I repeat, the vice of absinthe-drinking for only the reasons above mentioned is deplorable and utterly *sans une raison d'être.* The hapless minnow in the deadly clasp of the devil-fish has more chance to escape from its clutches than the Parisian *flaneur* has from this vice, who watches the morn of life fade into night, who knows no law but the one of habitual drink, who has no sense of honor, no sense of loyalty save fidelity to his favorite god—absinthe.

The young men drew up before the café. As Brandon had divined, the band were there in force. The little tables, standing far out on the boulevard, were all occupied, and the scene presented the varied picture it always does at that hour. Old heads and young, bearded men and striplings, flowing locks, bald heads, heavily lined faces, countenances as yet unfurrowed by care—all, all these in the motley crowd. Nine-tenths sat with hands clasped on the heads of their canes, their eyes dreamily looking at the slender glass in whose depths reposed the sea-green liquor.

Some were chatting gaily, some conversing and gesticulating in the Italian fashion, some seemed drowsy, while others were on the *qui vive* for all that was going on. As some well-known *demi-mondaine* would pass every eye was fixed and on the alert. Those grown old in dissipation and vice would leer

in an imbecile manner as the person passed, and make some gesture quite comprehensible to the street-walker. The younger men, with delicious impertinence, would speak loudly enough to attract attention ; then, when the lady turned, their words had already assumed the pure boulevard flavor, perfectly adapted to her understanding.

Ladies who, by chance, are forced to be alone in the streets at that time, suffer in being obliged to pass the cafés. As they are mostly occupied by inebriates and dram-drinkers, it is not at all unlikely one may hear remarks whose meaning no one regards ; but the fact of their being addressed palpably to some one, is in itself annoying. It is a very rare thing, however, to meet real ladies alone at that hour in Paris, as those who are unaccompanied usually choose a more retired promenade. Still, the absurd stories afloat that ladies cannot walk alone in the streets of Paris without being insulted, is one that should, on no account, gain credence, as it is false. A chance word that may escape the lips of some *flaneur* at a public restaurant should not be laid to the account of the entire male sex of a great city ; and no lady is in danger of having an affront repeated if she keeps on her way apparently unconscious of the slight.

CHAPTER VIII.

SUNDAY IN PARIS.

Lord Beaufort chose a quiet corner, and it was not long before the surroundings told upon his temper. He spoke with Athol, as of old, with the same unconcern, and in the usual spirit. He assured himself of his mother's well-being, and inquired for little Alice with real brotherly solicitude. He even broached other topics, but not *the* topic. In fact he seemed quite at his ease, and sipped a glass of Turinese vermouth, while Brandon toyed with his absinthe.

When they had finished their refreshment they seemed quite at their ease, without a shadow between them. It was time to dress for dinner when their glasses were emptied. Shortly after they found themselves well started homewards, and Brandon gave the full rein to his spirits. He remarked upon everything as they passed, recognized well-known Bonapartists at the Café de la Paix, smiled significantly when some fair dame saluted Beaufort or himself, and kept up so lively a conversation that time fairly flew.

The night promised to be fair, and the sun was

already hiding itself back of the old Palais Bourbon. The gilded dome of the tomb of the great Napoleon shone with a steady splendor, and the magnificent buildings that are in the vicinity of the Tuileries and Place de la Concorde were ablaze with the glories of the setting sun.

The victoria traversed the place and turned into the Champs Elysées. A world was about, but not *the* world of Paris. The avenue was thronged with carriages, but no one familiar face was visible. Anybody may permit himself the luxury of a vehicle of some sort on Sunday, as it is a regular fête, but few of the best society in Paris drive on that day.

It is a pleasure to watch the French people *endimanché.* As a nation they seem to have a peculiar appreciation of the meaning of the phrase "a day of rest." Mass in the morning, a family breakfast with *all* of the family present, a walk in the Champs Elysées in the afternoon with the little ones, and a dinner at any of the numerous cafés that one stumbles upon in every part of the city. They walk leagues for pleasure during the day, eat continually (for their appetites are insatiable), and dine off ten dishes at night, because it is Sunday and a fête. The evening is spent at the play, and after midnight Morpheus emancipates the tired bodies, and too much fêted souls. Looking upon the manner they pass this day, in one sense it becomes anything but a day of rest. It has the greater virtue, however, of satisfying everybody, being national and undeniably —French.

The Champs Elysées was so crowded that Beau-

fort turned into the Avenue Cours-la-Reine—a beautiful street embowered in trees, with a long promenade for mounted cavaliers, and lying in full view of the much-vaunted Seine. It is really one of the most beautiful in the city, and many celebrated people live within its aristocratic precincts.

They passed a fine house and saw a very imposing lady in a window. She was chatting gaily, and looked very "comffy" from the depths of her great chair. It was the celebrated contralto Marietta Alboni, Madame Pepoli, now a countess, and I don't know what else besides in the way of title. She is more honored with her first, however (that of a great contralto), than any of the others. Titles may be bought or bestowed—genius is inborn.

The gentlemen lifted their hats in deference to the near vicinity of so much distinction and drove on. At the corner of the Rue Bayard was Gustave Doré's famous studio. As they neared the house, the artist was just coming down the street, and the Earl stopped to say a little "good day."

Doré is young, almost handsome, with beautiful brown eyes, and much friendliness of manner. He seemed quite pleased to meet his friends, and immediately made a rendezvous for an early day. Beaufort was careful not to allow it to interfere with another engagement that weighed upon his conscience—semi-weekly.

Finally they reached the hotel. The weary traveller retired to dress, while his kinsman went to the smoking boudoir to see if there was any one there waiting. Beaufort was not a man that his

friends made use of, neither had any one full liberty to march into his house at any hour of the day and make himself at home ;—which means very plainly, smoking the best cigars, drinking any amount of liquors, and testing the wine-cellar to a capacity not even known to the master of the house. But the Earl was reasonably good-natured, and indifferent enough to pass for a much more amiable man than he really was. He was at home every day between twelve o'clock and two ; and very often the half-hour that preceded dinner found him quite disposed to receive his friends. I will be just enough to say that a welcome from Beaufort was never half-hearted. He was either glad to see one, or he made use of a woman's virtuous subterfuge—"not at home." He was thoroughly whole-souled, and happily English.

While he was dressing, the bell rang ; a servant brought him a note. Although they were not to sit down thirteen at the table, he half feared excuses. He was not nervous, but any conversation relating to Miss Leslie that evening was out of the question. He desired no *tête-à-tête* with Athol, and half tremblingly opened his letter. It was from an old friend. He read :

"Dear My Lord :

"You must breakfast with us, if possible, this week. I might let you off, but Countess Isaure is inexorable, and we name Friday, at half-past eleven. We have taken the liberty of inviting two old friends to join us, and hope you will not be engaged for that date. I am sure you will very much 'take to' one of them. *It* (mind I do not give the sex) is charm-

ing. I suppose it would be quite as enlightening to say *das kind*, for *it* is young, although—*soit dit entre nous*—the neuter of a German noun is never a thing one could *swear* to. What are you doing all of the week, and can we not dine together somewhere before Friday? This invitation has *affair* with the Countess, although I am quite as insistent as she that you do not fail us. This has been a busy time; although early in the season, we have been to two '*bals de contrat*,' four dinners, twice as many *soirées*, and a fine wedding. The bride was lovely and very rich. The last comes first. '*Very* rich' and naturally *very* lovely. The bride'smaids were charming, the best men all good *partis*. Let me whisper something in your ear! Although dressed in the most virginal of virgin white (pray do not think I am writing scandal), they do say that not one of these pretty creatures has a *médaille de rosière*. How sad that the outward sign does not always indicate the inward and spiritual grace. Believe me, however, things are not as bad as people think. 'Tis something to *wear* white garments. Ah! *mon cher*, your Shakespeare knew; assume a virtue, and you have it not, etc. Now I must say adieu, as the hour of dinner approaches, and this will just catch you. Madame's regards, my warmest and sincerest friendship, as I am always yours,

"LÉON VANDALIN.

"Avenue de Messine, 4 P.M."

Beaufort laughed and laid down the letter. It was so like the Count, a bit shocking, but not at all unpalatable. It is so satisfactory to know that other people in the world are talked about, for human vanity always protects the first person singular. His valet made a note of the engagement, and his lordship made a brief response, as follows:

"DEAR FRIEND:

"Always delighted to pay my humble duty to your lovely Countess. She is one of the few that cause us reprobate bachelors to regret the state of single blessedness. At half-past eleven then I shall be promptly on hand. Your announcement of *das kind* half puzzles me. Provided it be not a musical prodigy violin, or piano, I shall be present. Your remarks on the wedding are amusing. I almost take back *mine* about single blessedness. Why should *rosières* flourish only in Neuilly and—imagination? We will try and arrange a dinner for Wednesday. *A propos*, I am not alone; my kinsman, Athol Brandon, has come to Paris to pay me a visit. He is the gentleman you have so often heard me mention, and the one you once missed at Shanklin. Drop in to-morrow for tea, and let me present you. I close with laying my heart '*aux jolis petits pieds de Madame la Comtesse.*' You might have cause, but *don't* be jealous.

"Yours affectionately ever,

"BEAUFORT.

"P.S. When I spoke of musical prodigies, I omitted including male singers. I don't wish to insult you, but it's not—I hope, it's not an importer of the high C's. One thing I consider more disgraceful than all others, and that is to be born a tenor. Tenorism—if I may invent a word—is a birth-mark which stains through generations. Ages cannot wipe it out.

"Yours hopefully,

"B."

The Earl despatched his answer and proceeded with his toilet. A tap on the door, followed by a head peering half-way into the chamber, disclosed his

cousin in irreproachable swallow-tail, and looking very handsome and refreshed.

"Not ready yet," said he, brightly. "The hour nears seven, and we are a long way from the Anglais. I will leave you to yourself and look into some of old Dethune's albums which are in the library; but you will have to hurry!"

Beaufort explained: "I had to read and answer a letter from my old friend, Count Vandalin; and, by the way, you may as well look at the epistle. It is in Gallic-English and not at all dull. You must know Léon. He's one of the few that render life and society perfectly delightful. His remarks are sometimes a little *décolletées*, but it is like the fashion the ladies have of dressing for dinner, when a belle drops, not her eyes, but an inch too much of her corsage. I will be with you directly."

Brandon took the letter, and a moment after Beaufort heard a laugh, followed by the words which came through the door-way: "I think he must be awfully jolly, and, without wishing to add to a rolling ball of snow, I think I know who the——"

Beaufort emerged from his dressing-room with a sly expression dimpling the corners of his mouth, and interrupted:

"You think you know who's who? As Allani says, 'I *guess* we all know,' but it's as well to let the sleeping dogs lie. *Allons!*"

They went down the Champs Elysées this time, and turned into the Rue Royale without having met a friendly face. Brandon found Paris her old smiling self, and expressed his real pleasure at being back

there again. Sunday in England has little terror for the orthodox Briton; but honest folks do say that Sunday, in any other spot in the world, is a little less depressing than in the great "gathering place of souls," London. Even Brandon could not help remarking the complete emancipation from daily toil indulged in by the gay populace that thronged the streets. The honest, happy faces that beamed on one from every side communicated some of their cheerfulness to him, and each moment he felt his heart growing lighter, without knowing why. They passed the great Church of the Madelaine where priests mumble *aves* over scoffers' bones. There was a humming in the air, a murmur of hundreds of chattering voices, a satisfaction in the to-day, which, in any nation other than the French, would presage an equal satisfaction for the morrow. It is well understood, however, the value of the French *endimanché*. It is like coupons for a theatrical performance marked "good for this date only," or champagne—when the cork first flies out, one should take while effervescing.

CHAPTER IX.

DINING AT THE "ANGLAIS."

THEY reached the Café Anglais in ample time, although the carriage could move but with difficulty. The habitual loungers at Tortoni were the only ones who lingered at this late hour. Handsome Italians were taking their vermouth and talking politics as usual, while the restaurant of the *Maison Dorée* was already filled to its limit. The young men remarked this from the window of their beautiful salon on the first floor, facing the boulevard. The guests not arriving, they remained for a few moments looking out upon the scene.

The day is pleasant in Paris, but the night is fascinating. Especially does one become permeated with a sense of the beautiful when looking upon the witchery of these wonderful Boulevards. Not an occasional café is seen, but ten, a dozen, twenty, with their superb furnishing of gold and crystal, and the great mirrors from floor to ceiling, reflecting the inner and outer world. Myriads of gas-jets are reflected from burnished silver, the crystal of chandeliers, and the surface of polished mirrors, till the scene is one of indescribable splendor. Every day one is treated to a real *tableau vivant* that excels

the finest stage effects. Not even the enchanting fairy pieces at the Chatelet, with their gorgeous transformation scenes, can compare with the *ensemble* of the Parisian boulevards, when the weather is fine and the cafés show forth in all their ravishing splendor.

In a moment Lanesborough and Allani arrived. There was cordial handshaking and a delightful absence of ceremony. The gaiety of the evening had penetrated everywhere, and four happier-looking or more amiable young men would not be met with "in a month of Sundays." It was time to serve the dinner. Conversation was not fairly under way until the coppery bivalves had disappeared. A remark from Allani, on American oysters, caused something like the excitement of Orsini's bomb when the Emperor was driving in Rue Lepelletier.

Neither of the other gentlemen had visited the New World, and they could not realize the fact that any oyster could rival the little coppery *insect* that is served up with such gusto on the continent. Allani repeated his remark, that the "American oyster is the only one in the world fit to eat. Perhaps," he added, "that is an extraordinary statement. I shall modify it. I don't think that after eating oysters in New York, one would ever again care for this," indicating a mottled speck that rested like a stain on its shell. Lanesborough began:

"It's all well enough for Allani to talk up America. I never imagined one could become so wedded to a savage country, you know. 'Pon my life, it *is* extraordinary! After three trips there, and four or five years under a stranger flag, he gives up everything

for the fascination of a New World. I am not much of a traveller," he continued, with unstudied candor, "and I cannot imagine life out of London or Paris. Vienna is not bad, and the pretty Viennese are really too seductive on a moonlight night at Schonbrunn. Italy! ah, Como's a funk, Venice a harbor of bad smells, Rome condensed miasmas, and Petersburg a nihilistic camp. One can't speak a word in the club without running afoul of some confounded socialist, and ten to one you light your cigarette over a concealed factory of dynamite. Thanks, awfully, but *no* Russia for me. I will eat my *caviar* in a more civilized country." The obsequious waiter standing near heard the word "Caviare" and reddened. He kept getting redder until his finely starched collar seemed to choke him, and there was imminent danger of rupturing some blood-vessel. He advanced, and with an "Ahem!" with glaring eyes no longer concealing his indignation, he commenced: "Caviare! mi-lor" (with a voice half authoritative, half humble), "caviare; *permettez-moi*, we have the article. It is even upon the *menu*, but who, (I beg mi-lor's pardon), who could possibly desire to eat caviare with their oysters? But if mi-lor wishes, I——"

All looked up and laughed. The man's distress was evident and honest. Lanesborough stared at him with calm deliberation, took in the collar inundated by too much throat, stuck his glass in his eye, and with ineffable repose, continued his survey of the garçon. Twice the man attempted to go on, to explain. With each fresh effort, the gentleman

looked at him—looked at him as only an Englishman can look; and as the officious servant made one final attempt to speak, Lanesborough held him with his gaze. That last look was too much. He bowed frantically, and walked out of the room with the same dizziness that affects the steps of a man walking on the edge of a precipice. He was already disgraced in his companions' eyes; a thousand desperate thoughts flashed through his brain, the most harrowing one, that his *pourboire* would not "materialize" that evening. While Lanesborough was yet looking, the velvet *portière* concealed his retreating form with as much kindliness as it could have shown toward an emperor, and the dinner went on. Lanesborough said:

"What the devil was the fellow trying to get at? He quite took my breath away with his warmth!" Beaufort laughed and said:

"For a man whose breath is taken away, you had every appearance of life, and your coolness was a fine set-off to his 'warmth,' as you call it; but we must be generous. He thought you wanted a *hors-d'œuvre* with your oysters, and the best self-control in the world is not proof against the despair of an inborn butler when he sees a change in his *menu*. People must eat in order, live by faith, and never, under any circumstances, take tart when they should try artichokes. I remember one second *maître d'hôtel* we once had, that left the house at Christmas time because I would drink champagne all through my dinner. I have changed now. That was in my salad days, when the midnight oil was burned out at Grosvenor Square germans, and I had a mania for the spark-

ling drink. Poor man! did I know where he is, I would send him a letter informing him of the return to reason of his old master. Allani (suddenly turning to him), what's all this talk of Lanesborough about America? Have you really become a naturalized citizen of the United States?"

"Dear me, no!" said Allani very decidedly, with a laugh. "I like America immensely, but I am still loyal to her Majesty the Queen. I think that Englishmen might adore the country, live there years, be constantly going back and forth, yet never swear citizenship in one of her States. We are English. Why should we become naturalized Americans? It is like one being one's second self. In an English-speaking country, one cannot feel the great difference in race. Did I not hear my own language spoken, I would not be so much struck with the resemblance between us. Believe me, that is the first consideration when one arrives in the great city of New York. One sees fair English faces, hears strong ringing voices, and, best of all, one hears the mother-tongue in the first sound that greets his ear on landing. That is one reason why we are predisposed to like America from the outset. To get there creates almost the feeling one has on returning home after a long absence. In a ten days' trip crossing the ocean, there is time to think a great deal. One expects discomfort, bustle, noise, a new people but a slight remove from the aborigines, and exaggerates the possibility of not being able to 'take to' them even with time. A trip to America is looked upon as a thing to be done to gratify curiosity, not to study or appreciate a great people. I—"

"Hear! hear!" interrupted Brandon. "My dear boy, what can have converted you, you the acknowledged infidel, into the belief that out of London—"

"There is a bank," Beaufort chimed in. "Ten months have certainly made a great difference; but I'll tell you the reason. He is cured of his extreme youth. The changes each day are not enormous, but the total seems to have been radical, effective, and complete. What is it, my friend, will you explain?" Allani looked half serious, but simply answered:

"If it be interesting, I don't mind telling you, only it seems out of place here. The truth is, I found my trip to America one of such novelty and charm, that I began directly to see things in a different light. In two days after my arrival, it broke upon me that in England we live in a groove; and, instead of being the greatest race in the world, we are far less remarkable than Americans as a nation. The effect upon my mind was something overwhelming. I was quite dazed, as I tell you. We are so self-secure in our estimate of Old England, that no amount of talk on this side of the Atlantic can bring before us the tremendous reality of what America is, and after seeing it, even one glance at New York, one's ideas suddenly collapse. The most cherished hobbies become helplessly wooden; the most exaggerated idea dwarfs in comparison with what this people and country veritably are. You say I am changed. Possibly. I looked at myself in the glass two months after my first visit, for it seemed to me that my mind would show through my features the colossal transformation it had undergone. I no

longer saw through the glasses of British prejudice, and although feeling at all times a sense of my own importance as a loyal Englishman, I realized very emphatically that there is a New World and a new people that command our admiration and respect. What the nineteenth century requires are civilization and progress. England harps on the one, and is gaining but little in the other. There are giant intellects in the New World, which, if I mistake not, will carry that people through everything. In two hundred years there will be but one nation—Americans. Europe is already rotting. I must say that England has now solid minds and men, and we are a clever people. The reason Americans will get so ahead is that they are just *English* enough to have all of our egotism and foresightedness, with enough native shrewdness to hold on to what they gain, and to be continually on the lookout to profit by others' failings. Added to this they are advancing, while all other peoples are deteriorating.

"They are strong in body, and absorb all that comes into their country from any source. The terms 'emigrant' and 'exile' sound harshly. They represent the enormous outpour of different blood that flows into the American continent. All races intermarry there, and in that way a people can never become extinct. The entire European continent transplants her sturdiest shoots to American soil. The lavish coffers of the old world are emptied of their choicest gems; fresh, strong, temperate men go from every part of the earth to found their fortunes in the New World. Physically, America is

bound to excel every country. She drains the civilized world of its best blood, and this, mingling with the native fluid, makes such a strengthful, life-giving foundation, that this people will have first of all the health to outlive all other races. Europe will be mouldering in silent dust when Columbia will be giving birth to Spartan sons and daughters. But—bless my soul! what a harangue! Forgive, but don't forget. I am serious in what I say."

"My dear boy," said Beaufort, "you talk like a book, and I now insist that when you have eaten something (you have been neglecting the inner man), you tell us more about your new love." A chorus of "Hear! hear!" interrupted the Earl, and Allani promised to answer questions, but no detailed account would he go into. They turned to the bill of fare, and the waiters heaved an enormous sigh of relief. The idea of a first-class dinner spoiling while any man talked about any country! The caviar had been on the table and was already a thing of the past. The lamb chops, with broiled kidneys and mushrooms, were just being deposited on the table by the butler previous to their being served; and the cheerful sound of opening bottles began to give a certain zest to this little affair. The cellars of the Café Anglais are famous, and the choicest vintage was sacrificed to the Earl's taste and means. Chateau Yquem with the oysters for those who liked it; sparkling Sauterne, Johannisberg that would tempt a king, Lacrime Christi, Rudesheimer, and I don't know how many of the white wines that end in "bergs" and "heimers"—priceless in value and

exquisite in flavor, were set before the guests. The *menu* was elaborate enough for a royal repast, and nothing went wrong.

The cook should have had a V. C., as the kidneys were done to such a turn that the most exacting epicure could find no fault. The mutton was so young, tender, and well bred, that it might have sported as a lambkin at Hampton Court, under the very eyes of Victoria Regina, her most gracious majesty.

As usual at Parisian cafés, the cooking was so good one could get up an appetite even if not at all hungry, and believe me, the dinner ordered by Beaufort was a very *chef-d'œuvre* of the *cordon bleu.* The Earl, himself, had been *distrait.* Brandon was a bit ceremonious, but Allani was charming, and Lanesborough the very person that makes a delightful addition to any dinner party. The conversation, strange to say, had been thus far on America. Allani expressed himself greatly surprised at Beaufort's sudden interest in the country and everything that pertained to it. He little knew that some of England's bluest blood had throbbed with fierce fervor, only thinking on a fair face and a gracious woman who owed allegiance to the stars and stripes. Brandon knew full well the reason of his cousin's sudden attention, but coldly ignored Allani's half interrogative remarks.

"Tell me," said his Lordship, when the first meat dish came on; "what do you think of American cities, and how about the fair beauties that are said to be as universal and numerous as sands on the seashore?" Allani laughed pleasantly as he said,

"Not so fast: one thing at a time."

CHAPTER X.

AN ENGLISHMAN DESCRIBES AMERICAN CITIES.

"THE cities are fine, large, and well populated. New York, the largest, is a world of bustle and confusion; the men look haggard and worked to death; the women are pretty, overdressed, and ingenious. There is such a noise and racket in the streets that one is almost distracted. The first impression is that the comet has fallen into the sun, or that people have but one day to live, and in that day everything must be accomplished. A man going to drop a letter into the post will tear along as if pursued. People are momentarily in danger of their lives, and they risk death to catch an omnibus two seconds sooner, losing an hour perhaps, immediately after, in a block in Broadway. There is no repose, no sense of anything but hurry up, 'time is money.' At seven A.M. the streets are thronged, at nine the ladies are dressed, and at eleven tired nature already begs for surcease. People make visits before luncheon, and it is no uncommon thing for calls to commence at ten A.M. New York is a great commercial metropolis, and the society mostly consists in the largest bank accounts charitably pronouncing the open sesame to the other medium-sized fortunes.

"Wealth rules the day. No one without a great sufficiency of this world's goods can put a foot anywhere in what Gotham calls her best society. Another New York institution are the Knickerbockers. They exist in Vans and Vinns, Welts, Roses, and Vilts, Hooffers, Hoffers, and I had near said Heiffers, and a quantity of old Holland and Flemish, whose ancestors figured in Washington Irving's tales. These people keep generally to themselves, despise the society of filthy lucre, and spend their time at impossible soirées, where they tell, recapitulate, and demonstrate the importance of certain mouldering bones in the old city graveyards, and their own special greatness in being the lineal descendants of so much bony-fied aristocracy. Most of these famous ancestors—by the way—were importers of laces and tobacco, linens or other dry goods; and it is really difficult to appreciate the exact value of the Knickerbocker heraldry.

"Brooklyn, the 'City of Churches' and pretty women, is across the river from New York. It is quiet, brown-stone, and as different a town from Gotham as if belonging to another continent. Philadelphia is Quaker-like, respectable, and filled with people that wear a sanctimonious garb, hiding from the outer world all of their deformities, yet manage to have the best time *en cachette* of any city in America. Every married man who leaves New York for a spree goes to Philadelphia 'on particular business.' In Cincinnati they talk pork and support musical societies. It is called 'Porkopolis,'—by the way, an uncommonly good name, and somewhat sug-

gestive. In Chicago, the greatest grain market in the world, there is rivalry about the pork trade. In the Garden City (as Chicago is called) the manipulation of the *porco* is something marvellous. There are great stock-yards near the city, and the cattle come in to meet their fate in thorough-bred fashion. As fine a hog as ever squealed comes to the packing-houses, walks up a flight of marble steps, passes through machines that do anything but resuscitate life, is killed, scraped, cut, packed, and salted in less than two minutes. In short, it goes in a well-to-do live animal, and comes out bacon and tooth-picks. Even the bristles are utilized in this great Western town. They do things quickly in the Garden City. It is a splendid place. Lake Michigan is a lovely sheet of water, bounding the east side; the parks are fine, and there is not left a vestige of the recent great fire. The people are whole-souled, handsome, and the pluckiest on the continent. Without the Yankee indelicacy, they are very clever in business and make really the most enterprising city in the Union. Chicago is the fastest place outside of New York, as, naturally, where one finds the greatest number of desirable qualities, one finds also the most concealed vice; but it certainly, taken all in all, is the most interesting and remarkable city of the New World.

"Boston—ah—classic Boston! The 'Hub!' Boston is quite like an English town, and besides being very intellectual, is also very avaricious. It is certainly *comme il faut* and very clean; but I found it too un-American to interest me specially. They have

great literary lights in Boston, scientific meetings, guilds, women's righters, and pretend to the highest class of education in America. Their afternoon teas are æsthetic and scientific, and their 'evenings' so classic that Aristotle would have trembled to be there in person. They think nothing of three hours of Homer, another evening ditto Milton, and another of Shakespeare. I was present once on a Dante night. After referring in a modest prologue, of an hour, to the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, the reading of the evening was the entire cantos of *Il Paradiso*. Of course it was a translation, in good English—by-the-way—and a very fine effort by a university professor of Cambridge. The expressions that most interested everybody were something like this: 'Dante looked into Beatrice's eyes, and was in the first heaven.' Murmured 'oh's, ah's,' etc. After a long harangue Dante ascends into the second heaven, *Mercury*, and here more exclamations, applause, *Beatrice's* beautiful answer fully understood, and a general idea prevalent that *Mercury* would appear in *propria persona*, with winged heels and caduceus. A little dissatisfaction when Dante ascends into the third heaven. They know little of *Venere* in Boston, rarely having had any female marked from birth with all that goddess's charms and her peculiar style of beauty. The words 'says I to him,' and 'says he to me' were of very frequent recurrence. English is a language very easily understood by Americans, but the translation hardly corresponded with the dulcet Italian, '*Io a lui ed egli a me.*' The effect, however, I suppose, was quite the same.

"The triumph of Jesus Christ was received with loud applause. What a thing to be a believer in so highly cultivated a city as the Hub! It is a sad thing, but great intellects sometimes deny the Christ. Midnight was approaching when the flight into the ninth sphere was finally reached—*Beatrice* still looking into Dante's eyes. The vision of the divine essence and the perfect harmony of the nine celestial choirs reflected the greatest credit on the conductor. Remarks on the creation were found old-fogyish, and there bellion of the angels was severely condemned by some fading Venuses. The ascent into the empyrean realm was a triumph of the reader's art. The description of *Beatrice* (still an enchantress) seating herself upon her throne, the mandation of St. Bernard to the poet, and the final triumph of everybody (principally that of the audience over the reader) finishes with Dante quietly contemplating God and the continued glory of the heavens, and the new remark that '*Beatrice* was still looking into the poet's eyes.'

"By this time the drawing-room intellects were emancipated from '*Il Paradiso*,' and I wondered no longer at the lined faces and heads turned prematurely gray, unquestionably by the sorrows of a night 'with the poets.'"

Allani drew a long breath. He was tremendously applauded by his *convives*. Beaufort, in the meantime, had been quietly replenishing his glass, and a slice of a fine *selle de mouton* really had disappeared from his plate. By the way, do Englishmen ever dine without their "saddle of mutton?" Habit is

so extraordinary a thing! It reminds me of the Londoner who drove an omnibus, and took a forced holiday at the end of five and twenty years. He woke up the day of his release, and at half-past seven A.M. thought over his resources for enjoying himself. His quick brain devised the means. He went to his brother, who was likewise an omnibus-driver, and said, "George, I 'ave a 'oliday. Let me drive your homnibus to-day; it goes hin a different part of the city than mine. I am h'out on a 'oliday!"

After the mutton there were *entremets;* after that game of the season, and thus the dinner went on. All announced themselves as so interested in Allani's talk of America that they begged him to continue. He responded that he had nearly finished, but was ashamed to monopolize the conversation. Beaufort insisted that he should continue, and Lanesborough said, "By Jove, yes. I haven't heard anything so good in a long time. That Boston evening was a narrow escape from premature baldness. Ah! let me congratulate you!" Allani laughed and answered:

"I see you feel all bound to say you like what I am talking about, but I half believe that you are bored and won't say it."

"No! no!" cried the young men in chorus. "Go on! go on!"

"I left Boston," said he, "a happier and a wiser man, but never repeated my experience of evenings with the classics. Washington, the capital of the United States, is the most delightful city in America. The society is like that in any great European centre.

The White House is quaint, old, and scarcely suitable for the residence of the President. I must say that its historical interest is a great charm, and that there is an air of a *casa signorile* about it that exists in no other house in America. The souvenir of distinguished people has left its impress on everything; the rooms, with their panelled ceilings and dark wainscoting are, some of them, as beautiful as in any palace. The 'East room,' where Washington held his receptions, is a superb apartment, style *empire*. The only really harrowing things are the incongruous pieces of furniture and the carpets that have been selected, not from economy, but lack of taste. Washington reminds me of a small duchy where the reigning prince is surrounded by his satellites and subjects. There is a great deal of etiquette, and, being the seat of Government, society is bristling with foreign dignitaries. There are diplomatic dinners at the White House, diplomatic receptions, army and navy balls, ladies' afternoon teas most ceremonious, and a round of routs, parties, visiting and receptions, that keep up through the whole of the winter.

"It is a perfectly cosmopolitan city, and I repeat, delightful. It is the only one where real society exists in America. Now I am sure you have had enough of American cities. I must tell you of——"

Beaufort rose and interrupted: "The ladies, God bless them. Of course, you were going to speak of them?"

Brandon looked at his cousin. He seemed excited. He spoke of the ladies, because he wished to toast

American women, in his heart, to toast *one* woman, Miss Leslie. He evidently was deeply smitten, as the whole of the evening had been devoted thus far to America, and it was very evident that there would be cessation of talk concerning the New World. Allani said:

"Yes, the ladies, God bless them! but no! (gravely) first the Queen, the Prince of Wales, and the Royal Family."

Beaufort bowed, but Lanesborough interrupted:

"No! I say no! decidedly. This is not a political dinner, and some way when one commences that regulation toast at this stage of the repast, the carriage is usually ordered only long after midnight, and I find myself still repeating: 'I now propose to her Majesty to propose to the royal family to drink *my* health as long as they live and prosper,' or words to that effect. No! no! let's commence with the ladies."

"Yes," said Beaufort, "but I propose an amendment; suppose we say, to the *American* ladies!" and Allani added, "to American women, the most virtuous and beautiful in the world!"

They drank standing. Lanesborough, when he had emptied his glass, said:

"The most beautiful, yes, the most virtuous—hem—that's an open question and utterly useless any way. If they are so beautiful, their other qualities must necessarily be hidden, and if a woman only looks handsome, she is forgiven a multitude of sins."

Beaufort interrupted with some warmth:

"Your schooling, my friend, has undoubtedly been

perfection in its way; but there are men who like to think their mothers, wives, and sweethearts virtuous as well as beautiful. American women have the reputation of being virtuous. Let us, at least, give them the benefit of the rumor. But—" courteously to Allani, "there is one thing you have not yet told us. Did you lose your heart in America?"

Allani was so taken by surprise that he reddened, but did not answer. Brandon noticed the change of feature, and was about to remark it when Beaufort broke in:

"Ah! ah! blushing! Is it possible? and thereby hangs a tale. Let's have it by all means. Mystery, moonlight, a pretty woman—lost a heart, found by Allani! Pray let us hear the confession. I never thought it of you, but you've stolen a march on us, my dear boy; and we must have all the why's and wherefore's at once."

To the amazement of all, Allani looked up with *hauteur* and answered shortly:

"You must excuse me, really. I am quite willing to discuss American women in general, but no woman in particular, and certainly no American."

Lanesborough, with characteristic stupidity, said:

"It's no use, dear boy; you've evidently been hard hit by some United States belle, and it's deuced mean not letting us into the finale of your *affaire de cœur*. Do! *do* be generous. I am dying to hear of a real American flirtation in America. They do that sort of thing in London, Paris, Nice, and the fashionable watering-places; but, alas! no sooner does one get acquainted with a beautiful heiress,

but she catches Roman fever; her silver mines lose their ore, and her mother wants to take her back to some Wall-street broker, to whom she's been engaged all of the time of her finishing in Europe. He has lost his future wife during two years! she has learned enough of Paris life in that time to give him the full benefit of the French matrimonial system. Can't tell me any thing about that, my *très cher*. I know well several of Columbia's fairest daughters and—well, I drink to their good health! Clever women, d—d clever, and handsome enough to have kept even De Stael's tongue a-wagging for another century; but to your tale."

Brandon, who hitherto had been the silent one of the party, now interposed.

"Do not think me ungallant," said he, "but is there no other topic that is discussable at the present moment? America, with all due deference to our dear friend, has provided the means for a charming and highly instructive discourse. We have drunk double bumpers to American women. Pray, if we must still keep on the subject of America, let us hear something of American men."

Beaufort interrupted: "First of all let us see to the inner *man*, not American. Here is—what? *perdreau aux choux*, and a *Château Larose* that Hebe might have decanted a thousand years ago; and nectar is called nectar because Hebe poured it out. I am not exactly a Hebe, but will fill Allani's glass myself as a special reward for the description he has given us of the great New World. Like Lanesborough, however, I still believe that he lost his heart,

and beg him, for the sake of old times, to tell us *all* about it. *Allons!* Here's to Allani's experience in following Ovid's tender advice, in America."

Allani looked up and spoke quietly, although his voice was as unsteady as the reed that is bowed by the wind.

"You are right!" said he slowly, and the white fingers tightened around the slender glass. "You are right but—don't think me unmanly. The heart I lost perhaps was so worthless that, were it to be found, no one would take the trouble to keep it. Speaking of American women brings down upon me a weight of sorrowful recollection. The light of my life has gone out, and I am separated hopelessly and for ever from the ideal of my first love." As he said the words "separated for ever," the slender stem of the wine-glass in the nervous clasp of his strong fingers snapped in twain with an ominous sound, and the sparkling wine leaped with joyous glee into the very faces of the Earl and his guests.

Allani laughed bitterly: "So," said he, watching the foam as it disappeared, "so do men's hopes end like a broken glass, the wine spilled in other men's faces, perhaps, who care not to inhale even the odor of the smallest drop. He who waits at the fountain to drink of the crystal waters, when his glass is just filled, starts at some shadow reflected in the pool, and with the start his cup falls. He is left alone without drinking. The shattered remnants of a once filled glass are all that remains of his cup of expected happiness."

CHAPTER XI.

"O THE SMELL OF THAT JASMINE FLOWER."

It would be impossible to imagine the effect of Allani's words. Beaufort, whose fine sensibility had already been awakened by his friend's conversation, found himself strangely touched at the abrupt *finale* of what promised to be a mock confession of a love affair. He was amazed and exceedingly distressed at the turn matters had taken, yet it was impossible to accuse himself of indelicacy as host. The whole thing had come upon them like an avalanche, and no one seemed to have remarked the first discomfiture of Allani when badgered as to his conquests in America. Happily the servants had withdrawn, only the discreet butler stood near the side-board, purposely arranging some dishes of fruit. Allani was soon himself, although the others were still disconcerted. Such a thing happening was quite enough to dampen the rest of the evening. Beaufort, thinking in his heart as he did of one American, felt most uncomfortably impressed. He could not rid his mind of the constantly recurring idea that he also was in love, and Allani's unfortunate experience augured something equally unlucky toward himself. It was a bad omen.

Why had they spoken of America? why had his ungovernable curiosity led him so far as to spoil the whole evening? He tried to excuse himself; to say that it was not curiosity, only his deep, desperate interest in everything or anything concerning the woman he loved. He no longer denied to himself that he loved her. He felt a maddening, helpless passion taking possession of him. He was drawn into a whirlpool of amorous hopes, each succeeding inrush submerging him more deeply.

When Allani crushed his glass in his fingers, the wine flew in every direction; and, perhaps because he was nearest, the greatest quantity splashed in Beaufort's face. He had wiped his cheek with his handkerchief, and as Allani finished speaking, he took it mechanically again in his hand. He put it to his face and half started. Mingled with the faint scent of the white jasmine was the sickening odor of "dead" champagne. The combination of the two was stifling, and affected him in the same way as flowers at the funeral of a friend. For days after, the sight and smell of the same kind of blossom is unbearable.

Beaufort thrust his handkerchief into his pocket as if he had been stung by some recollection. The unhappy *contretemps* of Allani's being in earnest about a love affair had a depressing effect on the dinner. Happily it was near its end.

Lanesborough, at this critical juncture, came to the rescue. He was a capital diner-out; and a diner-out is equal to any emergency. He took in the situation fully as far as Allani was concerned, but was some-

what puzzled at Beaufort's distraction. With admirable tact, he drew the conversation into a channel just different enough not to startle any one by its abrupt change; and, in a moment more, the name America had ceased to vibrate on the air. He began about the Opera, and said he had met an artist who had an American wife. "No, by jove! she was from South America, not the same thing. She's so jealous of him," said he, "that she knocks at the green-room door during rehearsals to know when he will be ready to come home. The other day she interrupted the orchestral *prova* to call him off the stage, because his arm was a shade too tight around a prima's waist. Her husband says he's sorry he knows how to spell the word 'America.' Speaking of the opera, what do you think of Beaugrand's dancing? Isn't she just the airiest thing in the world? What a pity Greece forgot to arrange about one feature in her face when ordering her profile! otherwise she would be perfection. The young *Ophelia* Devries is going to leave the stage and marry—a dentist! Just think of it! Whenever I look at her now, I smell creosote. She says she hates opera, but it is a pity; her voice and singing are charming. Why will she retire so early? I love music, and the opera here is splendid in its *ensemble.* Chorus and orchestra are fine, but the dancing, except that done by the *premières*, is fearful.

"To tell the truth, after Italy, one can't *look* at other ballets. They don't know what the word means outside of Warsaw, Milan, and Naples, while as to London—well, we won't speak of operatic ballets;

the girls are sexagenarians, have no idea of walking in a straight line, and they wear their skirts too long. I suppose it's because the Queen is so fond of Bal-moral, eh—Beaufort?"

Lanesborough's attempt at wit was startling, but it took. The earl laughed quite heartily, and said "*Mon ami*, you have always had a serious objection to too long skirts, and no one will quarrel with you as to your little joke about Balmoral. By Jove! they *are* a hard-looking lot of virgins."

"Stop! stop," interrupted Lanesborough; "I won't have them traduced. You should call things by their proper names. Strictly speaking, I suppose, only one woman in this world ever bore that title with impunity, and her name was——"

"Mary had a little lamb," put in Brandon jocosely, "why don't you start some nineteenth century subject, my friend? Not but that an oft-told tale is sometimes the truest, and I hope none of us doubt *à la Voltaire* the story about Bethlehem."

The tempting appearance of the after vegetables announced the disappearance of meats. A sorbet was the usual interruption after the roast, and grouse as tender as old England could ship to Paris lay on the silver dish almost untouched. Salad came and went. The hot-house asparagus caused some enthusiasm, and the cheese arriving after an *omelette soufflée*, the dinner was supposed to be fairly at an end. The butler here opened some Cortou '64 and Chambertin '72. "I prefer Chambertin," said Brandon and Allani, while Lanesborough tried the Cortou and the Earl kept him company only to be polite.

The liqueurs and cigars at last found their moment had come. It was after ten o'clock, and from the window a sight of the glittering Boulevard was most enticing. Brandon proposed that they should leave the liqueurs to take a stroll outside, and after they could drop into the Café de la Paix to smoke and take a *pousse-café*. The proposition was received with great applause, and five minutes later the animated couples were walking rapidly toward the Bonapartist resort. Beaufort, who was beginning to feel the fatigue of playing the amiable host, when his mind was in anything but an agreeable state, purposely walked with Allani. He had been most affected by the singular interruption to their amusing lecture, as he called Allani's remarks on America, and he could not divest himself of the idea that sooner or later he would hear more of his friend's love affairs. He had the liveliest regard for Allani, and for the first time in his life showed him that he could be all sympathy without intruding himself on his confidence.

His manner was soothing, and as they neared a street lamp, they suddenly caught each other's eyes. Beaufort smiled with grave meaning, and showed that he was *en rapport* with him, for they were unconsciously thinking of the same woman. The Earl looked at him closely, and without saying a word, he slipped the other's hand into his arm. There was a world of meaning in the act. Allani pressed his fingers unconsciously on his friend's hand. From that time forth they would be nearer and dearer, for both felt that the other had suffered. They had been

acquainted for years, but knew each other only from to-night. Thus quickly the bond of friendship knit itself in the case of these two men. Ordinarily the earl would never have confided in Allani ; the other would never have confided in him ; but, without a question on either side, they understood each other, and in years to come this night's work would never be undone.

CHAPTER XII.

ETHEL LESLIE.

Avenue Matignon is a fashionable street, and it is peopled mostly with foreigners. Russians, Spaniards, Hungarians, and Americans pay fabulous sums for the pretty apartments and hotels, and think themselves lucky to get in such a "swell" part of Paris. The house No. 400 was very deep, and possessed, besides a decent court, a fine garden in the rear. Miss Leslie lived with her aunt, or rather, her aunt lived with her. Miss Leslie had no lack of this world's goods, and the aunt did not at all object to spending her time with her niece, and the money that would otherwise have accumulated with great rapidity at the younger lady's bankers. They suited each other very well, and beyond an episode in their lives that her aunt could never quite recognize as a fortunate one, they were happy, and enjoyed themselves much after the fashion of rich Americans living in Paris.

It was evening, and the pretty hotel was ablaze with light. Dinner had been finished for an hour, and the ladies were in Ethel's boudoir, just contemplating a splendid fire that roared in the open chim-

ney, and Mrs. Adrian (the aunt) was preparing to make the tea. They were alone, and not at all dull, as ladies are supposed to be when they are by themselves—although Ethel was quiet and, as usual lately, very contemplative. Her aunt spoke :

"Ethel!"

"Yes, aunt."

"Ethel, shall you go to the reception at the Legation on Tuesday?"

"If nothing happens in the interim," she responded simply; "you know—you know I go to the Latin Quarter to-morrow night."

Mrs. Adrian's brow clouded.

"Must you go? Let me be your substitute for once. I am sure Harry will be glad to see me, and I cannot bear to think of your going alone there so often. Besides, you return with your feelings so harrowed up that you are ill for a day after. In fact, you are scarcely ever your old self now. I would give anything in the world to see you happy and cheerful, if not gay. Come, let me go to see him this time, and you shall see how pleased he will be. We will divide the visits, if you like; only do not attempt too much yourself. You will break down under this self-inflicted task. Think, if anything happens to you, he will then be totally deprived of even a weekly visit."

The girl hesitated, looked at her aunt, then said softly :

"Dear Auntie, I realize the truth of all that you say, but I cannot deprive him of the pleasure of seeing me, nor myself the mournful consolation of

going to see him. You may accompany me on some occasion, however, if you will, but not to-morrow. Besides, you forget I have Felden."

"By-the-way," said Mrs. Adrian, "how does he? Are you content? I caught a glimpse of him as you went out the other night, and 'pon my soul, he appeared quite a gentleman. I was surprised——"

Ethel interposed: "He does seem more than his position, but he has seen better days. He is quite unpresuming, and never talks. I would dislike to have any gossiping attendant, and I am really well pleased with him. I only wish he did not wear dark glasses; but I suppose he must. He says his eyes were affected by the glaciers in Switzerland. Is tea not ready, dear? I feel quite thirsty." Her aunt looked wisely into the pot; a fragrant odor exhaled; the water was hissing in the *samovar*. She then brewed the refreshing beverage, and putting a cosey over the urn, said:

"In one moment, my love; it must draw a little, and I know just *how* you like your tea." She clasped her hands, threw her head back a trifle, and looked like a sorceress who was making a magic brew, and awaited the completion of some potent charm. She was making only an innocent cup of tea, yet her face assumed an expression that Hecate might have worn when she said:

> "Great business must be wrought ere noon.
> Upon a corner of the moon
> There hangs a vaporous drop profound.
> I'll catch it ere it come to ground,
> And that, distilled by magic sleights
> Shall raise such artificial sprites

As, by the strength of their illusion
Shall draw him on to his confusion ;
He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear
His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace, and fear."

Was she wishing a happier fate to the mysterious occupant of the *sixième* in the Latin Quarter, or was it only preoccupation about a "good cup" to soothe the nerves of her lovely niece?

Ethel Leslie was young and beautiful, with every charm that woman may possess. As she sat in front of the fire, the light from the blazing wood shining full in her face, she was a study that Rembrandt himself might have wished to reproduce. She was slight, of average stature, with a form just budding into womanhood. She sat back in her chair, with her shapely feet poised on the fender, and a dinner robe of amber silk trailed its shining folds on the rich carpet. Her corsage was cut low and was filled in with some lace than which a cobweb seemed less fine. Her features were statuesque in repose, and as clearly cut as a cameo. She resembled the statue of Psyché in the public garden at Naples, more especially in her low brow and beautifully curved mouth. Her eyes were almond-shaped, a dark hazel, with the deep violet tint. They were often deeper and blacker, but never any lighter. Her hair was a chestnut brown, with a golden glimmer on the locks which waved away from the temples. When loosened it fell in curling masses far below her waist, and was so voluminous in quantity that it was the despair of hairdressers. She rolled it at the back of her dainty head ; yet, in spite of golden pins here and there, a

long lock escaped and curled in beautiful carelessness on her shoulder. It looked so pretty against the amber of her gown, that one was tempted to caress it, as she did herself when she unconsciously wound it round her fingers. Her complexion was fair and pale; not the slightest shade of color tinted her cheek; her dark lashes threw her eyes into still deeper shadow; her brows were finely arched, but haughty; and her ears, guiltless of ornament, were like pink shells stranded on a coral reef. Her face was one of perfect beauty, and endowed with the rarer charm of intelligence and heart. It bore the expression of simplicity and innocence that is seen in the Carlo Dolce madonnas.

Oh, greatest of all gifts, beauty! Madame de Stael had counted the cost when she offered half her knowledge for a few personal charms, and would consider them cheaply bought.

Mrs. Adrian, a fine woman of about forty, was one of those whole-souled, good-hearted people who are a legacy to any family. She was sufficiently well-bred to appear well in any society, and being without nerves, was a reposeful person to have near. Some people absorb all the vitality one has, others, by their very presence, stimulate and rest one. Ethel loved her aunt, but above all did she feel perfectly at ease and unconstrained when with her. The fine harmony that sometimes exists between instruments of roughest wood and finest finish explains exactly the perfect accord between these two. Miss Leslie was the "finest string on the harp." Mrs. Adrian had so little fineness in her composition that she never

offended by discord in any way, being a perfectly matter-of-fact woman. She never attempted to explain impossible things, and never jarred on her niece's feelings.

Mrs. Adrian handed the tea. Ethel took the little Sèvres cup in her hand, and was just about to drink as the bell rang.

"Visitors," said the aunt, tranquilly.

"Undoubtedly," responded the niece. Then the footman presented some cards. Miss Leslie looked at them languidly, then, on reading the names, said, with more interest than she had hitherto displayed:

"Yes, we are at home. Show the gentlemen in here." And as he retired she half straightened up and prepared to receive their guests. The door opened, and two young men appeared on the threshold.

"Ah, Monsieur Gratiot," said Madame, with a warm smile, "and—and Mr. Blakeman. Is it possible? How pleased I am to see you. Ethel," turning to her niece, "Ethel, here is an old friend; quite a surprise, and you are both just in time for tea."

Ethel leaned quite forward and prettily held out a hand to each. "So glad to see you," to Mr. Gratiot; "and you," turning to Blakeman, "when did you arrive from Italy?"

"Last night," he responded, pleasantly; "and you see, my first duty is no duty, but a pleasure to come and pay my respects. And you, madame," turning to Mrs. Adrian, "how fares the amiable Mrs. Adrian, and has she renewed her threats of leaving Paris? I hope not. It's really the only city in the world, and although I am a fanatic on the subject of

Italian sunsets, I still give up anything to live in *la ville du monde.*"

"I sha'n't answer a question till you have some tea," said Madame, complacently; "or would you prefer something stronger?" and, without waiting for his words, she leaned toward Mr. Gratiot.

"Touch the bell, *mon ami*," said she, "and we will soon have something more to the taste of young men!"

"I will ring," said he, "with pleasure; but you know I *adore* tea. In fact, there is only one thing served up as refreshment in Paris, in the evening, that I object to. It is *eau de groseille*, in battered English currently known as currant-water. I was glad enough to get some when we were with the ambulance; although Dr. Janeson insists that the Prussian bullet was less fatal. Think of dancing all night and drinking a little poor jelly in lime water! then, as the *cotillon* is fairly underway, one has a cup of hot soup stuck under the nose."

He took his tea, and Ethel interrupted: "Yes, it is funny. I shall never forget my first *soirée* nor the anxiety with which I waited for midnight. No American suppers, no delicious sandwiches, no iced champagne—only weak currant water, fruit from bushes that had never been grafted, some sweet wafers that looked like galvanized cobwebs, and some *bouillon*, that reminds one of hospital fare for the beggars waiting outside of some orphan asylum. I suppose," with a little sigh, "it is more wholesome, but it never seems to take the place of real supper at a ball, with ices, meats——"

"Chicken salad," interrupted Blakeman.

"And a jolly good lot of champagne punch," broke in Gratiot.

Ethel laughed. "How American we are, to be sure," said she, simply. "I wonder if we will ever forget the good old times we had in the States?"

Mrs. Adrian spoke:

"Of course we never will forget, but why shouldn't we have some punch in Paris as well as in America? I am sure of myself, and have not (through a long residence abroad) lost my old art of concocting a delectable drink."

"Punch and tea," said Blakeman, "charming; but who's going to drink punch, and who tea? I, for one, am in favor of the former, but do not let me be the arbitrator. You know, Mrs. Adrian (slyly), no one could withstand the hope held out to have some of your delicious, old-time——"

The door opened. While the gentleman had been talking, Mrs. Adrian had rung the bell. Henri, the chief footman, stood awaiting orders. Mrs. Adrian said:

"Light in the *salle à manger*. Prepare the large punch bowl, and put the usual wines on the sideboard. We want some sandwiches, fruit, and——"

"Great heavens," interrupted Blakeman, "but we have just dined, or I have."

"So have I," said Gratiot.

Mrs. Adrian interposed: "Not so sure about that! What time is it now?"

"It has just struck ten," said Ethel.

"Well, you dined at seven," said Mrs. Adrian, "so

did we ; but Ethel didn't eat a mouthful, while I—well! my appetite is usually *fair*, but when she makes such a farce of eating, I haven't the heart to dine alone."

Gratiot went up to the young lady, he took her hand, and looked her seriously in the face :

"What is this story about not eating? Do you wish to break down entirely? Now try and please me. Do make an effort to take food, and don't fret so much." He spoke in an undertone. Blakeman, the while, was talking with the aunt.

"I am not fretting more than usual," said she, faintly, "but how can I eat when food chokes me?"

"Think of some one else," said he quietly. "Remember you are the only stay to one lonely heart."

"Is there any news?" She spoke hurriedly, and looked eagerly in his face. He hesitated.

"There is no *bad* news, so that already is good, is it not?" He looked at her with affectionate solicitude. She pressed his hand :

"You are so kind," she murmured; "what should I do without you? I will try to keep my spirits up; and *allons!* I will drink some punch and, to please you, take even a sandwich." Blakeman's cheerful voice broke in :

"Why won't it do? Of course it will, and we shall feel so much more like taking something after. Miss Ethel, I am just telling Mrs. Adrian that we ought to go out. The evening is perfectly lovely, and Paris is such a picture. I know your old habit of driving about at night." She started and looked

at him, but he went on all unconscious. "We might go to see the panorama or hear the end of a sacred concert. It is—no, it has been Sunday to-day. Or, better still, we might take a *fiacre*, and drive as far as the entrance to the *Bois* and back, or go the Boulevard way. If you won't drive, why, let us drop into Madame L——'s, who receives every Sunday night. Or——"

"Stop! stop," cried Ethel, laughing, "you take my breath away. I object not to all, but to some of the programme; and first look at me." He looked very admiringly, and interrupted, "*Charmante, ma belle dame*, as usual."

"No," she smiled, "I did not mean that. I am in evening dress. We are both *en toilette*. How is it possible to go out? yet the fine night half tempts me. Is there a moon?"

"Is there a moon?" he responded, echoing her voice, "of course there's a moon. There always is a moon when a fair lady requires her, but I am serious; there hasn't been such a night in Paris, to my knowledge, in an age. *Do* say you will come, and then after our return we will test the capacity of the punch bowl, the quality of the cellar, the sandwiches, and everything else that Mrs. Adrian so well knows how to provide *impromptu*." Ethel looked at her aunt.

"Dear child," said the latter, interpreting her glance, "certainly, if it will please you. We can soon be ready; and in the meantime, find your way," turning to the gentlemen, "to the billiard-room, and have some cigars. Henri will get a *fiacre*, and we

will run away to dress." The footman appeared in answer to her ring. "A carriage," said she, "and call Mademoiselle's maid at once." "Madame seems to have forgotten," said the footman, "that the carriage is at the door. It was ordered for this evening at ten."

"Of course, I had quite forgotten," said Ethel, "we were going to a dear friend who is always at home on Sunday. Now we will drive instead. I will be with you directly." She arose and was really animated at the thought of going out. Mr. Gratiot was charmed to see her so willing to be diverted. He looked half jealously at Blakeman, who had the happy inspiration to think of anything that would please her. She had ordered the carriage, to be sure ; but it would come and be sent away again. It was what she did almost every day. Make plans for her own diversion, then sit dreamily before the fire, for hours, thinking of her unhappy lot, and brooding, brooding ever on what was least pleasant in her existence. One thing she never forgot, her visit to the Latin Quarter. No matter what the weather, she was punctual in there. On other days she appeared downcast and irresolute, but when that hour came, she was all firmness and full of woman's beautiful courage. Some natures come out strongest in moments of the greatest need. Miss Leslie could "screw her courage to the sticking point," when necessary, and never once would it falter or prove inadequate.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MOONLIGHT DRIVE.

In a moment she returned, attired in a walking suit of dark cloth, and Mrs. Adrian being ready, the party soon set out.

"Where shall we go?" said Madame.

"Do you wish to please me?" said Ethel quickly.

"Yes," her aunt replied, "if you will be reasonable."

"Reasonable!" said Mr. Blakeman; "as if our dear friend could ever be aught else. But what is it to be, panorama or promenade?"

"Promenade, by all means," she answered. "Let us drive to the Place de la Concorde, then over the other side, and drive up and down by the Seine on the route to Auteuil and back. Nothing could be more lovely on a moonlight night; and it will not be too far. The carriage will be open, and——"

"We shall freeze," interrupted Mrs. Adrian. "How can you think of going so far? I fear only for your health, my love," she added amiably, "for you see the air is already a little chill, and coming out of a warm room. However, what pleases you will charm me, and I know the gentlemen won't object."

"Object!" said Gratiot, "I should think not; only don't let us stop at Auteuil."

Blakeman spoke up significantly: "You see, dear Mrs. Adrian, he is afraid of the water-cure. But don't be alarmed," turning toward him, "I will see that we have very little water-cure to-night. I am not so ungallant as to wish our drive over, but I know of one who will do ample justice to the punch when we return."

"I hope you will all do justice to it," said Mrs. Adrian; "I should take it as a personal affront if every drop does not disappear when once I take the trouble to brew it my best and——".

"And, auntie dear," broke in Ethel, "to pay you for good-humoredly allowing my caprice, I will drink my share, and not forget how kind you are to your little niece; also, that no one in this world can brew punch as you can."

By this time they were well started toward Place de la Concorde.

"Oh! the heavenly beauty of this night!" said Blakeman. "Why can painters never reproduce, with any fidelity, the most majestic of all sights. The queen of night riding high in the heavens, her light silvering terrestrial objects with an attenuated, ghostly, yet warm radiance. Everything in painting has reached some degree of perfection, but art has utterly failed to reproduce the reality of a moonlight night."

Ethel said after pausing a moment: "I do not know but you are right; still the young Italian artist in London, de Nittis, paints night-scenes with fair skill."

"Yes," said Blakeman, "more than fair; but no matter how fine the picture, the charm of real moonlight is lacking. He paints smoke and fog, dull lights on the Thames, and shows London as it is in some places, with real truthfulness; but the glorious splendor of such a night as this, for instance, I fear me will never be transferred to canvas."

"My dear friend," said Mr. Gratiot, "who wants this night on canvas? Is it not much better here? I would not have it transferred for anything."

"Scoffer," said Miss Leslie, playfully; "it is such natures as thine that hold us down to everyday life; and, indeed, it is delightful to enjoy things exactly as they are. Now, with all due deference to both of you, gentlemen, I can imagine no greater trial than to be born without artistic instinct, but with an artistic mania. An ordinary worm travelling its contented pace under foot, is by the poet transformed, first, into a fire-fly, then into a lamp, then into a meteor, and next——"

"Into an electric light," laughed Mr. Blakeman.

"Exactly so," said she. "A good sign-painter leaves his native country to study art here at *Les Beaux Arts*, or in Italy. After a year of drawing blocks, he takes up the nude model and is amazed to find that the limbs will get out of shape, that the head is badly poised, that the fingers are too long, and the joints very badly made. Instead of regretting that he ever attempted more than his first ambition, the longer he works and the worse he does, the more is he fired by fame's delusive beacon. He finds the models all bad—they move at their sit-

tings, their drapery is wrong, and their feet large. He next tries interiors, with no better luck. After that portraits, of course; and when ten or twenty years have fled, he finds that he has never enjoyed himself so much as in America, where his dancing Bacchantes illuminate some lager-bier signs, or his fine panel portraits showed to advantage in the horse-cars or the omnibus. He has made Christs; but the strict Romish churches have already been provided. There are so many masterly Murillos, tender Tintorettos, gentle Guidos, beautiful Bellinis, and victorious Vincis about, that an honest, hard-working sign-painter cannot get a chance to do even a back altar in a country town cathedral."

"Peace, peace, woman," said Blakeman, holding up his hands; "remember I belong to the craft, and my last——"

"Your last," she interrupted, "is unfinished, not unhandsome, and the very, *very* thing that I have saved a corner in my boudoir for. But as to other branches of art, really," and turning to Mrs. Adrian with a laughing face, "you must let me continue. You started me on the subject, and if I don't have my say out you will all regret it, as in after years I am quite capable of taking up the same theme, and just where I now leave off. To return——"

"Then," said the gentlemen in a breath, "we will permit you now to proceed. Such a fate to look forward to would be horrible, and we may be in New York taking stock in the proposed elevated roads."

"It would not surprise me," she said simply; "you

always take to anything 'elevated.' But to resume: Where was I? oh, yes——"

"I am a capital hand at prompting," said the artist; "when your breath gives out, or you stop from any unknown cause, I will unobtrusively murmur the cues. The last word was 'cathedral.'"

"Cathedral," she repeated with emphasis.

"Period," said Gratiot.

"How can you be so absurd?" said she; "but I *will* go on in spite of these interruptions. The next mania is music. We will leave out violin and piano, as failures in either case are hopeless; but the voice——"

"My love," said her aunt, "you mention voice; pray think of your own; you will be hoarse, not to-morrow, but to-night, and you will need, at this rate, to say a few words at supper."

"At least," said Mr. Gratiot, "we hope to hear a few words whenever Mademoiselle is good enough to talk; but she must go on now, the subject of music is inexhaustible. We can go to Auteuil and back again, and she will only have commenced the prelude."

"Music," said Miss Leslie—"no, a voice is the supremest of all of nature's gifts. I"—she shivered.

"My dear," said her aunt with firmness, "it is getting too chill to drive, and I insist on our going in. We are far past the *Champ de Mars*, it is eleven o'clock. Let us return and finish the discussion there. While I brew the champagne cup, you may have full opportunity of uttering your heresies at your own ease and that of everybody else. Gentle-

men," appealing to her companions, "am I not right?"

"Certainly," they made answer, "quite right, now and ever, Mrs. Adrian. I think even your poor sign-painter's most despised interior would not be at all unappreciated at the present moment. It *is* cold, by George, and the Seine, although frozen over with moonlight, looks uncommonly chilly, and there is a wind coming up strong enough to blow away even my prejudices against my native country."

"That," said Mr. Gratiot, "would be quite impossible. I will allow exaggeration, but not ruthless blasphemy. It would be a sin to judge your own firmness so lightly; and this wind, on the contrary, is limited; your prejudices are not."

"Let us go as far as poor Marie Antoinette's tower, and then I will return willingly," said Mademoiselle. "I promise not to speak one word in the meantime, and you know that that is a great sacrifice on my part, considering I have so eloquent a lecture on voice cut and dried, and ready——"

"Like the sweetest herbs," interrupted Mr. Blakeman, "to be hung up in the garret for winter."

They drove along the quay and reached the old Palais, or *Conciergerie*, where the lovely Austrian spent her last night on earth. The view from this point is very splendid, and especially at night. The place is invested with a mournful charm. The waters of the Seine glide on peaceably, without a hint as to the time when boats flew across their dull current, bearing human beings whose life-blood was so soon to redden the old *Place de la Grève*. The

little round tower of the *Conciergerie* is lighted up by two grated windows, one on each floor, and from behind these upper bars Marie Antoinette watched the ebb and flow of the tide that would go on when she was gone and forgotten. Her voice at night was lost in the murmurs of the mysterious waters, and her sad last communings on earth were with the heartless Seine. Water—the most merciless of all elements, but not then so merciless as the maddened mob who foresaw not its own dissolution, when the guillotine first groaned beneath the Revolution's victims.

The carriage stopped, and Miss Leslie looked long at the old tower.

"I can half fancy," said she, "on a night like this, that we shall see the Queen come through one of the windows; that her fair hair will float on the wind—a veil to hide her from her enemies; that her face will be illumined by her martyrdom; that her eyes will burn like the stars of Bethlehem; and that her raiment will be wafted through the arched vault of heaven, as a bird whose wings may cleave empyrean space. Her hands will bear an olive-branch; her feet will spurn the gloomy tower where her days and nights and miseries were long synonymous, and her tortured body, clothed with eternal peace and light, shall vanish before the eyes of the faithful—the fairest lily that ever left a field crimsoned with the best blood of France."

"Amen!" said Blakeman, heartily. "Indeed, one can well understand your illusions. Every inch of this part of Paris is mystically historic. It is impos-

sible, even in the most prosaic of every-day life, not to be overcome with the charm and memory of the past. From the *Place de la Concorde* to the furthest quay of the Seine, the very stones are souvenirs. Think that where we are now looking, the noblest eyes of France have oft and fondly gazed ; where our feet tread, other feet have gone to meet a terrible and unmerited death—their forward footsteps steeped in the freshly-flowing blood of their best loved friends. These massive buildings, with arabesques and coronetted stones, have hidden with cold unscrupulousness, scenes of the direst misery aud horror. This river, that seems a lake of crystal silver, hides bones whose dust should have been sacred, and keeps secrets that the greatest of all alchemists would give a life-time to unravel. Every tree, every bit of green, of moss, or sea-weed, still lives in the past, and the grim buildings whose stones gather rot and mildew, speak of the millions of human lives that have consecrated this great city."

"Enough," said Mrs. Adrian, "of too touching reminiscences. Paris is, and always will be, the most interesting city in the world, with London historically the richest. Let us look at the other side of the picture. What," turning to Mr. Gratiot, "do you see on looking at the *Palais des Tuileries?*"

They were just opposite the ruins of the once beautiful castle.

"I see," said Gratiot, shading his eyes with a hand, as if looking on a mental panorama, "I see a ball-room with myriads of lights, thousands of people, and at one end a raised dais or throne. A lovely,

fair woman stands beside her imperial lord, and at their right a young lad, whose face reflects the father's blood and the mother's image. The lady comes forward, her person aglow with jewels. Diamonds of the purest water gleam in her crown; emeralds, rubies, and sapphires emit a thousand prismatic lights, and the front of her stomacher is studded with more gems. Her blonde hair falls in ringlets to her slender waist; her violet, almond-shaped eyes beam with mild radiance on her guests; her complexion glows with health; her bare arms and bosom shame the Parian marble in their whiteness, and her robe of emerald-green velvet, with ermined train, sweeps over the mosaic with the soft undulations of an Andalusian zephyr. Yes, I see the Empress Eugénie, as one rarely saw her, although her eyes' clear depths were already half troubled with the too studied politeness of the German Ambassador, and the radiant Princess Metternich seemed a trifle *trop au courant* with politics to hide from her speaking face the knowledge of an imminent catastrophe. The Emperor looks to right and left with perfect equanimity. The little Prince Imperial talks with charming *naïveté* to the surrounding courtiers, and the Empress still walks and mingles with her guests with her rare grace of manner. I see the end of the ball; the lights burning in the glittering banquet-hall reflect grim shadows in the mirrors; the tables groan less with their load of viands and ices; and I see the flowers drooping their heads, scorched and withered untimely by a feverish heat. Then one by one the guests depart. The Empress still smiles from her

dais, her weary head still royally bears her crown, and the diamonds flash from her stomacher with the same radiance. Then the scene changes. The guests become vampires, the lights incendiate the palace, the wine flows in poison and blood. The Emperor flies from his apartment, the Empress is clothed in black, the little Prince has grown years older in a single night. I see a royal lady escape from the burning Tuileries. I hear the rush and roar of the maddened Commune three months later, and I live over again the horrible nights of January, 1871."

He ceased speaking. Mrs. Adrian looked up with a determined countenance, and said:

"I am quite willing that you should see all of those things, as you were here then, and we not; but I prohibit you both from calling up such sad memories. Why, on a night like this, one should think of nothing but a joyous and beautiful present. I believe in enjoying that, and obliterating from the mind all things that have a tendency to make us mournful."

This perfectly matter-of-fact lady was not far in the wrong, but her niece, who was penetrated with sadness, spoke thus:

"Permit me to remark, dear relative, that all do not find the present joyous. Natures differ very much. You, with terrible exactitude, insist on a minute having sixty seconds. I, on the contrary (so humor my illusion, than which I hold naught else in this world so worthy of cherishing), would find it had only forty; or, to stretch a point, unblushingly give any pleasurable moment not sixty, but thrice sixty beats, or sixty times thrice sixty pulsations."

Blakeman interrupted—"Which means," said he, "that, in a little matter, such as going back a hundred years or so, you would have no difficulty in putting yourself immediately on the spot; and at this moment, can, at will, see decapitated queens flying through barred windows, empresses escaping with a large bag of jewels (do not let us forget the collateral) through an underground passage, a palace burning, a city blockaded, all because why? Because a night is fair, your poetic temperament allows itself to run wild, and the fairy boonlight (I have already a cold in my head) falls on everything we are looking at at this moment, even ourselves."

"I beg your pardon," said Ethel, laughing; "you are falling upon me at the present moment, and I consider you anything but boonlight although you are unscrupulous. How many stones, please?

"Only one," said he gaily, "and that is——"

"That," said Mr. Gratiot, "we all know is his heart."

"Perhaps you all think," said Mrs. Adrian, complacently, "that I don't see anything poetic because I don't rave. Well, to show you that I can fall a victim as easily as another to a prevailing epidemic, listen."

They all assumed an attentive air. "We now see before us the ruined ruins of what was once a beautiful palace; a palace where kings, emperors, queens, and empresses have lived; where crowned heads have spurned uncrowned ones; where balls were given at which princes and dukes walked alone; where doctors and dentists have mingled their

sentiments; where the rich and poor came into the front door of the palace; and where the butcher and baker left unguarded the back. I see," holding up her well-gloved number seven, "a garden where the limes and lindens hide the weekly wash; where the orange and citron could never furnish the royal table, but furnished scandal enough for a whole community; where fine gravelled walks cut the Louis Quinze heels, and finer ladies cut their too rich neighbors. I walk through this garden, leaving behind me this much ruined, once palatial palace. The glaring gutted windows let in the merry moonlight, and ominous shadows fall upon my back. These shadows are also borne by the stiff night wind and become a reality—a rigid rheumatic reality. They are no longer shadows. I stroll through this princely park, I look at these beautiful busts. The morbid marble gleams through the speaking shrubs and oracular orangers. I recognize some old friends, very old friends. Pan and Praxiteles, Venus and Vampire, Psyché and Plutarch, Melpomene and Mercury, Jupiter and Jenner, Milo and Metastasio, Hercules and Homer, Mars and Metternich, Antinous and Artemisia, Buffon and Bismarck, Leda and Lazarus, the Divinity and Dante, Cupid and Cleopatra, Prometheus and Plato, Pandora and Pluvio, Xerxes and——."

"For heaven's sake, dear, *dearest* aunt, you are going mad. Let us hasten homeward. I will never indulge in a poetical dream again in your presence." Miss Leslie was, with Mr. Blakeman and Mr. Gratiot, so convulsed with laughter she could scarcely speak,

but she managed to stop her aunt's epidemical rhapsodizing. She turned to the coachman and ordered him to hurry home, and in a moment they had turned their backs on the burned palace of the Tuileries, France's latest farce. When they reached home a comfortable scene awaited them. The fire was burning cheerfully, the lamps were lit, the salon and various other rooms were illuminated as for a fête.

How shall I record the flight of that pleasant evening? Mrs. Adrian's punch was perfection; even Ethel was hungry, and the cook, a marvel of good nature, had robbed an American hamper of some canvas-backs, which were done to a turn. Miss Leslie had forgotten her threat on the musical question and was the life of the party. Mr. Blakeman reminded her of what she had promised, but in vain.

"I am no longer in the humor," she said, persistently, "and could not say a word about any voice to-night. I only know that, thanks to you, I have spent a most delightful evening." The young gentlemen said "Good-night," but made a rendezvous for the following Tuesday. Miss Leslie promised to go to the reception, and turned to Mr. Gratiot as he went out.

"I shall expect news from you to-morrow," said she, "pray heaven it may be propitious. *Que Dieu vous bénisse.*" The young man bowed low over her hand. Mrs. Adrian smiled good humoredly, and said: "It's all right, they do it in Vienna to perfection; but I always smile when I see Americans so cavalier-like. What would they think in Bloomingdale to see a gentleman kiss a lady's hand before everybody?"

"Never having inhabited that charming spot," said Blakeman, "I cannot possibly say; but if they have such a hand as this there (indicating Miss Leslie's), I should willingly make a pilgrimage in order to kneel at so sacred a shrine. However, time flies, and we must go. A truce to compliments, madame, but always your obliged humble servant. *Bonne nuit.*"

The heavy door closed, and the ladies were left alone. Ethel turned to her aunt and (as was her custom before retiring), embraced her affectionately. "Happy dreams, dear friend," said she; "thanks, a thousand thanks for your goodness; and may the morrow bring us both cheerful news. I have not been so happy in a long time. Who knows but I may soon realize the truth of the saw, "*Tout vient à point à qui sait attendre.* The undisturbed pleasure of this evening seems a good omen. Again, good night."

CHAPTER XIV.

AMERICA.

THE house of the Minister was in Avenue de l'Impératrice, sufficiently far away to escape the crowd of the city, and near enough to the Bois de Boulogne to enjoy the fine air and the pleasure of living near so beautiful a park. On Tuesday evening, the honorable gentleman, with his charming wife, stood at the entrance of the long salon, receiving their guests ; his sons stood near, and his daughter, Mademoiselle Susie, although very young, was present on this special occasion. The extraordinary popularity deservedly enjoyed by the representative of the United States and his wife made his *soirées* something to look forward to. He was, at that time, the oldest resident diplomat in Paris, and had the good fortune to gather around him some of the most distinguished people that ever graced a Parisian *soirée* after the fall of the Empire. Poets and princes, ambassadors and prime ministers, came and went, and the decorated personages were as numerous as at any *bal des Tuileries.* Old heads and young, gray beards and brown, youths and maidens, came from every part of Paris to make their bow to the great

statesman. There were more foreigners than were usually seen at an American Minister's reception. The brilliancy of the court and evening toilettes worn by every nation, excepting America, added a picturesqueness to the scene that the orthodox swallow-tail can never give. The Hungarians, with their rich vesture; the Austrians, with their white and gold uniform; the Italians, with glittering medals and badges; Swedes with their northern costume; Germans with their military toggery; Spaniards with *Toison d'Or* decorations and sashes; Englishmen, Danes, Poles, Russians, each with their striking national characteristics, flitted back and forth in a kaleidoscopical panorama.

The ladies were present in force. There was the Countess P——s, with her classic face and fair hair, and on a marvellous costume was a sash of ropes of pearls worth a nation's ransom. There was the Princess L——, with her black eyes and stately figure. The Baronne Edmonde, an American, whose beauty had long been a theme in high society. There was Madame de R——, whose voice and appearance were equally lovely. There were Russians, Italians, English, Germans, and last, but not least, the fairest of *les belles Américaine*, who gave that colony the fame of possessing the handsomest women in the world.

The Russian women were conspicuous for their fair hair, lovely figures, and rich dresses. Their faces, one and all, express their love of intrigue, and lack of prudery. Their eyes follow one about the room, and their vivacity is remarkable. Beware, if a bewitching Slavonian casts her net; even a

devil-fish could not escape. The Italians have a stately suavity of manner that is fascinating while ceremonious. The dressing is original, the *decolletées* are courageous, and the languishing eyes of the Roman beauties fall on one with a combined glance of voluptuousness and intense sympathy. Italians have heart, and would throw a world away to gratify one caprice. Men may know *moral*, but rarely *financial* ruin at their hands. The modern French woman presents a vivacious picture of grace, perfectly disguised embonpoint, meagre corsage, and an endless train. Her complexion shames Sèvres painting, her eyes glow with a *bella donna* brightness, her face is continually rippling over with smiles, her teeth gleam (even her teeth are coquettish). Her tiny feet and high heels constantly escape from beneath her skirts, and her whole person is one lively life-like picture of a Parisian belle.

The English are tall, stately, very slim, and *very* fair. What is it the Legend says? "And the Lady Jane was tall, and the Lady Jane was fair." Well, I am afraid that they were all Lady Janes that evening, correct, badly dressed, slim, fair, and more at home in society than any other ladies present. The English girl is still and swan-like, talking with bated breath, never gesturing, and having the peculiar droop of the eyelid that society has evidently proscribed for all her highest votaries. It is very significant, that English raising and suddenly dropping of the eyes. It suggests outward form, inward ease, the latest thing in flirtations, and an admirable comprehension of that delightful French expression *en*

cachette. Albion ! we bow to thy wonderful daughters !

Then the Americans ! what a type to be sure ; no special type at all, only they look like Americans, which is all one can say. Such a variety of style is rarely seen. There are blondes, chataignes, brunettes, and the shades of all these colors, each one perfect in its own way, each one different ; yet the moment the eye falls on them, one says at once : "Ah ! an American, *une beauté Américaine !*" Every race has some distinguishing form of feature, but while these scions of the New World lay claim, man and woman, to great physical beauty, they can claim neither Roman noses nor Greek, Spanish eyes nor Titianze like tresses, nor powerfully built frames like the Russians, nor the graceful, undulating bodies of the Andalusians, or the voluptuous forms of the young Viennese maidens, as their type of race. But they can claim a combination of all these types, which made them what they are—American. One can yield the palm to a beauty wholly and completely aboriginal.

The older ladies have too little appreciation of appropriate dress for state occasions, the younger ones are over-dressed. An English young lady will wear a gold chain on her throat than which the Atlantic cable is slim, and her person will be so overweighted with a heterogeneous mass of jewelry, that she looks like a walking goldsmith's sign. A young American will wear dresses whose trains an empress would have been ill at ease to carry, the materials of the most elaborate stuffs and brocades that a grand-

mother could wear with dignity. Diamonds will sparkle in her ears like the headlight to a locomotive, her throat will be ablaze with gems, her hair will be powdered with various tinsel dusts, and she usually spends half her pin-money on point-lace so old that the very pattern is out of date. One is surprised, on noting the "get up" of a young American, to see that she is under forty. An ancient dame, who figured at the mistletoe bough celebration in 1600, could not be more richly and elaborately dressed than one of our pretty belles. She forgets that youth has charm and is in itself a rare adornment, while the added gift of personal comeliness is set off, not by exhausting the looms of their stiffest and highest-priced goods, but by a simple gown of becoming color and fabric, and, above all, nothing so conspicuous that nature in itself does not first attract.

It is this absurd extravagance in dress that shows off our American beauties to disadvantage. Where the dressmaker is uppermost, the greatest artisan in nature's handicraft is overshadowed by artificial pomp.

The Minister wore his happiest look; madame smiled and chatted with her guests. All languages were spoken, but in a little while, English predominated. At half-past ten a famous society belle made her entrance with glittering toilette and a train of satellites. Allani stood talking with Gratiot when Lord Beaufort and Athol Brandon came in. After presenting them to the hostess and her liege, they recognized several old acquaintances, and in a short

time were as much at home as in a London drawing-room. The Lady Eleanor Gray was the centre of an admiring crowd. She was an English beauty of much renown, her wealth was fabulous, and the world had already given her to successive dukes, princes, and counts. The latest matrimonial scheme had been to bring about a match between herself and Beaufort. His pleasure on seeing her was not wholly unadulterated, for he was thinking of another and wondering whether or no she would come. He was obliged to say polite nothings to the fair Eleanor, and apparently was bound to her for the evening. He was hemmed in by the worst of all crowds, a going-and-coming mass at a cosmopolitan reception. People jostled him, he was separated from Allani, and Brandon was already flirting with some pink and white perfection; so his chances of getting away grew each moment more desperate. While he was talking, the door opened. There was a hush and a murmur of admiration, and Mlle. Leslie, followed by her aunt, came toward the Minister. Beaufort felt such a shock on seeing her that his heart stood quite still. Yes, it was she! His beautiful, mysterious ideal, his pale companion on their nocturnal visits to the Latin Quarter. Lady Eleanor looked up, first indifferently, then with curiosity.

"Who can that pretty woman be?" said she, frankly. "I have never before seen her at any of the Minister's soirées, and in fact, I don't remember to have ever seen her face at any time in Paris. She must be a new comer."

Lord Beaufort looked indifferent and said nothing.

Lady Eleanor continued, "She seems to be known, and see, everybody is rushing up to be introduced. I suppose (half-jealously) you will soon follow the general lead." Beaufort could with difficulty conceal his feelings. He laughed, however, as men can so easily do, no matter how great their preoccupation, and said to her ladyship:

"I suppose I shall follow the general rule sooner or later, but at present, I stand a poor chance of getting anywhere near the Lady——"

"Dear Lady Eleanor," broke in a very English voice, "pray let me claim you for supper according to promise. No supper? Well an ice, something. Really there's a frightful crush. I have been trying to get back to you for half an hour. Lord Beaufort? Aw, yes, charmed, I'm sure," acknowledging her ladyship's introduction to the Earl. "You are in Paris for some time?" turning toward him. "Fine city, yes indeed, one always gets back here with pleasure."

"Colonel Hilson," said Lady Eleanor, "I believe I will take a promenade and—an ice. Can you tell me who that young lady is?" indicating Miss Leslie. The colonel turned his head in the direction her ladyship looked. He started, and said, "Surely I know the face; yes, I cannot be mistaken. It is Miss Leslie, the daughter of an old friend of mine, and one of the greatest heiresses America has sent over in some time. She is very charming, and I hope your ladyship may meet her. If an opportunity occur, I should like to make you acquainted."

Lady Eleanor bowed stiffly. "Always pleased to

know your friends, Colonel," she said, with ill-masked cordiality. "Is—is she quite American?"

"All, that is most American," said he with a little shrug of the shoulder; "but she is a Southerner and descends really from old English stock. I will tell you all about her some other time. It is so hot, you must be fainting for the want of some refreshments; *allons.*"

She took his arm and nodded to Beaufort. He bowed with scrupulous politeness, and for the second time in his life, believed in fate. He could have hugged the colonel for coming to his relief. And he even held the Lady Eleanor in higher appreciation that she had unconsciously left him to himself. The rooms were very crowded and stifling. He made his way toward the Minister, and saw Miss Leslie standing almost beside him. He felt the long-hoped-for moment approaching. She raised her lovely eyes and fixed them on his face. He went nearer and straight toward her as if drawn by an unseen magnet. The Minister looked pleased. He held out a hand and said:

"I see you have found friends, as I noticed you were talking with your charming compatriote; but now," turning to Miss Leslie, "with her permission I shall present you to a compatriote of mine." Then he went through the required formula. The lady bowed coldly, yet looked at the Earl with a peculiarly scrutinizing gaze. He felt as if she must recognize him, but no, that was impossible; yet his heart beat with violence, and it seemed that his brain was turning. Great heaven, was he already so interested

in this woman? She was looking so calmly on, and he—he was so madly in love with her that with difficulty could he command his voice. He summoned all his self-will and appeared, at least outwardly, unperturbed. Miss Leslie said to him:

"I have been speaking about London to Mr. Brandon."

"Mr. Brandon?" he interrupted, with astonishment; "you know my cousin then?"

"He has just been presented to me," she answered, "and he said he thought that he had seen me in England. So one thing brought on another, and we spoke of London. To tell the truth, I used not to like it at all, but now that I have friends there, I find it simply delightful."

"Now that you have friends there," he repeated, echoing her words; "surely (with gallantry) you must always have had friends everywhere that you have ever been; and in London we flatter ourselves that we know how to appreciate those who—who like London."

She looked half amused and made answer:

"Oh, you must not think that because I said I find it delightful, I mean that for always. London is a great world, and, of course, with a world must suffer many incongruities. Happily, that which is most distasteful is least seen, and above all, comes least to a lady's attention. I think every part of it perfect after we leave Piccadilly Circus. One goes straight on from there, and by the time one reaches Hyde Park only the gayest part of life is on the surface. London is a city for the extreme rich and poorest poor."

"Are you moralizing?" said he, faintly. "I hope not, although what you say must strike a stranger as very incongruous. Yet people are not worse off in London than in other large cities, I assure you."

She started and looked at him, and he noticed her momentary attention drawn toward himself. Without waiting for him to speak, she said half-hurriedly and under her breath:

"You must excuse me. It is very strange, but I fancied when I heard your voice, that we had met before. There is so familiar a cadence in it that I am sure I cannot be mistaken. Frankly, have we met before?"

He was staggered, and at a loss to reply. He parried her question, however, with consummate skill.

"I—I do not understand you," he said. "Have we met before? where, how, and when? I sincerely hope so, for then you might look upon me as an old friend and not a new acquaintance. But do not think me ungallant. I really——"

She looked up reassured and said:

"It was only a momentary illusion. It is quite impossible that we have met before this evening, yet I have a remarkable memory for voices and half fancied on hearing yours that it was familiar to me. I do not think you ungallant, my Lord, but assure you that for the moment it gave me quite a turn. Strangest of all is that I cannot place it, nor say whose voice it so resembles."

He felt relieved—*how* much she might never know, but he only bowed, as any well-bred man should, and allowed the question to drop. Just then

Mrs. Adrian joined them, and Mademoiselle presented him to her aunt. She had Brandon's arm, and he was half amused to see his cousin already sworn into the ranks of an evening escort.

Mrs. Adrian was all animation, and when the Earl expressed the honor felt at meeting Madame, she said:

"I am also pleased, my Lord, and perhaps you do not know that I find in your kinsman an old acquaintance."

"Yes," said Brandon, "we met in Luchon last year, and you must remember that I spoke to you how agreeable a day I had passed once *en route* from Biarritz, and of the lady whom I met so frequently with the Danuals. This is she."

"You must tell me all about it," interrupted the Earl, heartily. "Of course I remember, now that you mention it, but" regretfully, "you never mentioned that you knew Miss Leslie."

Mademoiselle laughed and explained:

"Oh, he never knew *me*. Aunt was alone, or off on one of her rheumatic expeditions with friends, and I was only a myth to Mr. Brandon, except as he may have heard of me through her."

Mrs. Adrian interposed: "My dear, I don't think your name was ever mentioned; however, it might have been. You are spoiled, my child," she added, good humoredly, "and think that I spend my time talking of, when not with, you. But you are mistaken. My only preoccupation at Luchon was my health——"

"And going over to the Portillion," interrupted

Brandon, jocosely. "I remember when our carriage broke down and stopped all the others just as they were going up the first of those continuous hills *en route* to the gambling place. Why, we had to wait nearly two hours, and had a real pic-nic on the top of a mountain looking down upon gorgeous scenery."

"I hope," interrupted Beaufort, "that you did not intend your adjective as a deliberate pun about gorges and ravines?" Ethel laughed.

"I am afraid any court in England would find Mr. Brandon guilty," said she, "but we will forgive you if the offence be not repeated," turning toward him. "Oh!"—with a little petulant movement, "some one is coming this way who bores me terribly. How to escape?"

"Quick!" said the Earl, "you say you are dying for an ice. Naturally many have died in a less worthy cause, but take my arm and we will soon be hopelessly lost to the sight of the enemy."

Admiring eyes followed the lady as she went past. Never had she been so beautiful before, and if he had lost his heart to a figure in carmellite grey, he certainly would lose it again this night. She was dressed in a toilette turquoise, blue *faille* and *crêpe* that trailed after her like a summer-cloud. Her heavy hair was dressed *à l'Impératrice*, and was caught with a pearl comb at the back. Her dress was covered with blossoms of the sweet Cape jessamin, and her hand bouquet was composed of the same rare flowers. She wore no jewels, and her pale complexion had just color enough to save it from its usually marble-like appearance. While dressed

with the greatest elegance and simplicity, she looked extremely young, and not *en trop grande toilette.* She was *décolleté*, of course, and the fine folds of the *crêpe* lying against her skin added a rose tint that always follows that shade of blue.

They reached the supper-room, and Beaufort thought of the lines,

> "She walks in beauty, like the night
> Of cloudless climes and starry skies."

Oh! how fair she was, how lovely, and how he would love her. Then to his soul came another vision—a troubled woman courting night's favour, and a mystery which seemed, alas! most profound and repellant. He tried in vain to enjoy the pleasure that the passing hour gave. Surely they were destined to know more of each other, and how could he reconcile himself to this double life? He would go no more to the *Quartier Latin*, and then at least he could ignore her daily movements. Fate, who had thrown them in each other's way, would surely unravel the mystery. Of one thing he felt assured, her entire and complete innocence.

Yesterday he had received a note. It was addressed to François Felden and ran as follows: "Monsieur, you are at liberty until Thursday. Call that day at nine P.M. sharp. It is unnecessary to say that I do not need you this evening."

This was last night, and already he was burning with jealous desire to know how she had passed her time. If she had gone to her usual rendezvous, if she had been alone, or perhaps—oh, fatal thought!

she had been accompanied by another. He was racked by conflicting emotions, and the day had been one long agony. He felt that he would meet her that evening, but what the result would be he could not divine. Would he be asked to call, could he find any pretext for presenting his *hommage;* would he—*could* he know her better, and how was it all to end?

They reached the buffet. He found a chair and struggled to get her something. She looked up amusedly. "I don't really care for anything. Surely you have forgotten *why* we came to the supper-room. I might take a cup of tea, but beyond that, impossible to touch a thing! I—to tell the truth—I don't feel quite well, and the heat is stifling."

He was at her side in a moment: "You are not well? Pray what is it? you are not faint, I hope?" She looked tired but not ill. He could illy disguise his solicitude, and his voice had the ring of genuine feeling. She seemed scarcely surprised, but answered,

"No, not faint, but a little 'under the weather.' To tell the truth," half hesitatingly, "I should not have ventured out this evening. I was ill all day yesterday and confined to my room."

His heart gave a great bound. So she had been ill, and no one had taken his place. To think that he could ever feel joy at the thought that she had been suffering! She had not gone to the Rue St. Père, and was well enough to come out to-night. It could not be serious.

"I fear," said he, "that you are really indisposed. Do not let us stay here. It *is* hot. I will find a quiet

corner and bring you some tea; but would not a glass of wine do better?"

She smiled a "No," and said, "I am afraid I have a weakness for tea and you may get me some, but I will wait here and then we will go. The *soirée* has been delightful, as it always is at Mr. Washburne's, and I never like to tear myself away. What charming and distinguished people one always meets at his house! You know we are very proud of our Minister, and although before the war he was popular, since he became a great lion. He is especially overpowered with attention from foreigners—a compliment to himself and an honor to the nation he represents. My tea?— Oh, yes, thanks. How lucky to get it so soon; and you, my Lord?"

"I will keep you company," said he, at the same time helping her to sugar. "I caught a servant a moment ago, and feel that we are fortunate to have gotten some under an hour. In fact," continued he, gaily, "it is too soon, I thought. I could keep you here all to myself at least ten minutes."

She smiled brightly. "Ten minutes! ten whole minutes! Why, that is a long time; worlds have been lost in less."

"Undoubtedly," he responded. "I know of one that I would lose in a good cause in much less time than that; but," he added, with half-serious *badinage*, "it was almost impossible to get to you; you were surrounded by a throng of admirers, men and women, and these ambassadors with their decorations, confound them! It is impossible for a young man to get any show at all now-a-days at a *soirée*."

"For shame!" she interrupted; "you complain thus? Why, I saw you for fully half an hour chained —fairly enchained—to the side of that lovely English lady. You did not seem at all anxious to leave, and I trust you would not be so ungallant as to say now that you longed for liberty."

She had seen him; that was something. He was dying to tell her how the moments really dragged until he had met her; but, on second thought, he spoke as a man of the world:

"Ah, the Lady Eleanor! yes, she is beautiful, and as charming as handsome. No, I must not say that I longed to leave her, but I suppose I may say that, some way, I longed to know you. Will you accept so paradoxical a view of the case?"

"I don't see why I should," she said, half coldly; "a charming woman is a charming woman; why one should leave one to——"

"To go to another," he interrupted, a little maliciously.

"I did not say *that*," she remarked, quietly; "but I mean, why one should leave a person who is all life and vivacity to go to another who is not, naturally surprises one."

"But I did not leave her," he said, determinedly, "she left me."

"Well, I suppose she is not the first," retorted Miss Leslie. "I do not think of a better thing to do than to follow her example. Suppose I leave you this moment and beckon to that old gentleman in the corner to come to me? He would offer me an arm on the score of old friendship. He does not

look it," she continued, naïvely, "but he is a king's uncle."

"What king?" said Beaufort, haughtily.

"The King of Spain," said she, calmly. "No apology; England may never have heard of the country before, but America has. Besides, we owe something to Spain, and *little* to England."

He put out his hands humbly. "Don't, pray don't let him supplant me. To please you, I think I would even be uncle to the Tzar and——"

"Father the thought," she interrupted, maliciously; "but it is no use. You have fallen in my bad graces, and besides, you are not speaking truthfully."

He looked up. "Well?" questioningly.

"Why did you say that the lady left you?"

"She did leave me," he persisted.

"But you wanted her to go!"

"That does not alter the fact," he added, calmly.

"But I mean that, that——"

"You mean," he said, deliberately, "that I sat enchained, yet my eyes wandered ever in your direction; that I spent half an hour at her side, longing to be at yours; that the moment you came in the room, I considered my evening would be incomplete if I could not have the honor of knowing you; and now that I know you, my——"

She laughed coquettishly, and interrupted:

"That will do. No more confessions, please; besides, it's time to go. I am not sorry, however, that you told me the truth; it has redeemed you in my eyes."

"How do you know I told the truth?" he asked persistently.

She blushed, but answered honestly:

"I—I felt it."

He spoke eagerly.

"Then you knew that I was watching you?"

"Did I say so?" she responds, archly.

"No," he is obliged to confess, "but you must have understood I wanted to know you. A woman always knows those things, and besides, now that we are both confessing——"

"Both confessing, my Lord?" coldly, "I am doing nothing of the sort! What can *I* confess? That you noticed me looking in your direction?"

"That I *saw* you look in my direction."

"That is another thing," she said.

"You are right," he replied, stiffly. "It is a vastly different thing."

She arose deliberately, and took up her bouquet. Her hand had been carelessly lying on the flowers, and as she took them, a lovely blossom snapped from the stem and fell at the Earl's feet. He picked it up instantly.

"May I keep it," said he softly.

She looked at him curiously, and answered:

"If you like," then idly, "I do not care for it."

He started.

"It is a poor gift if it have no value in your eyes."

"What possible value," said she, haughtily, "could one broken rose have in my eyes more than another? These will all be withered in a little while. I shall throw them away, and to-morrow——"

"To-morrow," he added, calmly, "you will have another."

"Yes, and the next to-morrow another," she said.

"And throw them away just the same?"

"Indubitably," she responded.

"But," he added, half unconsciously, "you offer me a *pis-aller*. I——"

"I offer you nothing! You took it," she said.

"I did that to be polite," he said, matching her *sangfroid*. "You seemed to expect it. A thing," with biting sarcasm, "that has no value in your eyes, could never possibly have any in mine, so I will throw it away, or better still, drop it where it first fell."

The flower did not fall at once, but, strange to say, rolled on her dress. It seemed about to stay there, then timidly dropped to the floor. She looked half vexed, half amused, but said nothing. They walked away in silence, and met Mrs. Adrian at the salon door.

"My dear," said she, with her lively voice, "I was just looking for you. I want you to meet Lady Eleanor Gray, who is perfectly charming and who wants to know you. I have found a little corner and she is waiting. We will go at once."

CHAPTER XV.

"MASKS AND FACES."

LORD BEAUFORT offered his arm. Mrs. Adrian took it as a matter of course, and they walked toward the little corner. Miss Leslie followed, but half stopped on the way. Mr. Gratiot came up and said:

"I wish to present an old friend, Mr. Allani."

She turned to recognize the introduction, but started hastily and with some confusion. Recovering herself as quickly, however, she held out her hand.

"We have met before," she said, frankly. "I also am pleased to see an old friend."

So far Mr. Allani had but barely spoken.

"We meet again," she said, simply. "Really, the world is very small."

"It is, indeed," he made answer. "Who would have thought that I should see any one to-night that I had ever met before?"

"Before in America," she interrupted, "and yet, what is more likely?"

"What is more *unlikely?*" he said. "I rarely go where there are Americans—now," hesitatingly.

"That is unkind," she answered, softly. "Have

you not been, were—were you not always well treated in my country?"

He looked up.

"Yes." I can never complain of the treatment I received while there from one—*one* and all."

She looked uneasy.

"Have you been back long?" she asked.

"No," he answered, "only about a fortnight."

"A fortnight!" raising her eyes. "Why, where have you been ever—ever since we last met?"

"I have been round the world," quietly, "and have grown older, wiser, but——"

"But," she interrupted, "you have not changed."

"In personal appearance perhaps no, but in other things, I ought to hope, yes."

She reflected before answering, then said with half concealed bitterness:

"I referred only to your personal appearance. I took it for granted that you had changed otherwise. Any man's heart is like a mirror, capable of reflecting any and every woman's image at the same time."

He laughed. "Pray, Mademoiselle, do not think that women have a monopoly in that very human characteristic change! Why, change is the current coin of the hour. How would we pay our daily pleasures without it?"

"Yes," she answered, conclusively. "Pay daily, then one does not pay so dearly. You may traduce your own sex if you will, but not mine. 'Man's love is of man's life a thing apart, 'tis woman's whole existence,' and Byron knew."

"No, but Julia did. I think, on the whole, the poet felt sorry for his own muse," he answered; "but I *am* shocked! Is it possible that you read——"

"Ethel, dear," said her aunt, "let me present you to the Lady Eleanor Gray."

Miss Leslie came forward. Lady Eleanor could not disguise her look of expectant curiosity. Yes, the lady was indeed charming. Her face was faultless, her toilette the height of good taste, but her manners were strangely *posées* for so young a woman, and an American too. Americans are usually so gushing. While polite commonplace was going on, the English beauty studied her unconscious rival, and finally spoke, saying naturally exactly what she did not mean:

"I am so glad to know you, and am so fond of Americans." Miss Leslie responded:

"Thanks, I am charmed to know you, and—and I also am fond of the English."

When she came to a standstill, Lady Eleanor looked at her quite curiously, then ventured:

"Your face is so familiar. Have I not met you somewhere in London?" The lady answered this time, with a smile:

"I think not, your face is not familiar, but had I once seen it I never could forget neither where nor how I had met it."

Lady Eleanor was pleased. No flattery is so sweet to woman as that which comes from woman. Lord Beaufort broke in upon the conversation:

"We are all of Miss Leslie's opinion," he said, quite gallantly; "how could one be otherwise?" Then he

thought to himself, "Those two are already sworn enemies." Just then Allani came up to be presented.

Lady Eleanor was never so delighted as when surrounded by a crowd. Her eyes flashed brighter, her color came and went, and her whole manner expressed the liveliest concern. She began saying how charming the evening was, and asked to have everybody pointed out to her, especially the Americans.

"I hear," said she, "that there is a large number in Paris."

Mr. Gratiot corrected her: "You mean, my lady, a large colony. That is the word used."

She laughed pleasantly and said: "Well, a large colony, if you prefer that word. But I must know who is who." Lord Beaufort turned to Miss Leslie:

"Have you curiosity?" he said, "or do you know everybody?"

"I have some curiosity," she answered, "and I know some of the people present."

"How guarded your answer," said he, half mockingly; "but let us listen, Mr. Gratiot is going to tell us——"

"Mr. Gratiot is going to tell you *what?*" said a new voice, and Mr. Blakeman came up to salute the Lady Eleanor, an old acquaintance. He had not noticed who was speaking, but thought it Allani, whom he already knew; but he hastily apologized when he found it was Lord Beaufort who was talking, a gentleman whom he did *not* know. Miss Leslie introduced them. His lordship bowed stiffly, and immediately fixed his eye on Blakeman. Who was he? and how did he happen to be on such good

terms with Miss Leslie? Was he in love with her? Naturally. He then decided to hate him at once.

Mr. Gratiot begged off when Mr. Blakeman appeared. He said:

"The Lady Eleanor wishes to know the names of some of the Americans present, and you must tell her. I can, but——"

"But," said Blakeman, "but you want to give me a reasonable excuse for joining in the conversation. Well, I don't mind. Shall I tell you outright, alphabetically, or will you point out those whom you wish to know?"

The lady looked up brightly.

"I wish to know," said she, "who everybody is in that corner," indicating, with a slight movement of her pretty head, a further corner in the long salon. "It looks *so* American, and they all seem to know each other so well."

He followed the direction of her ladyship's head, and ejaculated:

"*Ma foi*, you have just divined the truth, and I think I can name them all to your ladyship. Those ladies seated——"

She held up her fan, saying:

"Are all charming; nay, more, they look so awfully jolly."

Blakeman smiled warningly.

"No adverse criticism, or I will yield this task to another."

She started back with mock dignity, disclaiming by the movement any intention to criticise. He continued:

"That lady to the extreme left is Mrs. W. E. Pond. She is amiable, hospitable, and adores music. That gentleman near her, with the long beard, is her husband. He is a fine musician, and directs the choir in the American chapel."

"And the fair young man," said her ladyship, "is their son, who sings really divinely."

Blakeman acquiesced. "You are right," he said. "Thanks for the prompting. The lady next her is Mrs. Heathe. She is a great leader in society, gives superb balls, and is spoken of among the French as '*cette charmante Américaine.*' Her cotillons cost thousands of francs, and her house is most beautiful and hospitable. The lady to her right, in gray satin, *décolletée*, is Mrs. John Harland. She receives every Thursday evening, and has many foreigners at her soirées. Ambassadors, lovely countesses, dukes, ministers, and always the prettiest lot of girls to be seen in the city."

Lord Beaufort interrupted. "I must make her acquaintance at once, so as to be invited to her evenings."

"I will present you, my lord," said Miss Leslie. "She is a friend of mine."

"Thanks," murmured the earl, "you are *too* kind. I am all impatience. Shall we go now?"

"No," said she, calmly, "but some day in the distant future."

He looked at her with sparkling eyes.

"Which means" (eagerly) "that I am to see you again?"

She bit her lip, but answered frankly:

"Yes, you will see me, you will come to see me. Would you care to?" raising her eyes. "I imagined you wished me to ask you, and—and I do."

He was half angry and longed to repay her with a refusal to call. She was so sure, this mademoiselle, that every one who saw her only needed one look to throw himself at her feet. He presumed that she had already placed him on her catalogue of victims. If she only knew the truth! Realizing it himself, he grew more calm and answered:

"You are frank. Yes, I did wish you to ask me, and you know that I shall be honored to pay my respects to—madame your aunt." He could not forbear this last little cut. She looked up most amusedly.

"Tell the truth. You wish to come also to see me, *n'est-ce pas?*"

How could he hold out against such coquetry? She read him so well!

"I told the truth, but not the whole truth. I do wish to pay my respects to Mrs. Adrian, but I wish above all to come to see you. Are you satisfied?" this half humbly.

"It is almost a matter of indifference to me," she said, laughingly; "but I am satisfied—satisfied, *pleased*, rather, that you did not slight me intentionally; and had you insisted that you wished only to see my aunt, I could not but have felt hurt."

"I see," said he, "that you are fond of *badinage*. Well, so am I; but with you one should needs be most serious ——"

"That lady to the right," was heard in Mr. Blake-

man's cheery voice, "is a belle in the colony. She is Miss Robarson, and ——"

"I have allowed you to monopolize long enough Mr. Blakeman," said Mrs. Adrian. "You must allow me to describe her, Lady Eleanor," turning toward her ladyship; "Miss Robarson is not only a beauty, but has also another distinguishing quality. Her foot is so small that a shoemaker in the Rue 29 Juillet has placed a tiny slipper on exhibition, declaring it to be hers. Gentlemen of title, from far and near, make a pilgrimage to the cobbler's shrine. The owner of this Cinderella-like slipper has refused more wedding rings than any lady in Paris; but what can be more fascinating to a gentleman than to catch sight of a beautiful face, a beautiful dress—for she dresses superbly—and a foot peeping from beneath her robe which would have captivated Prince Charming himself."

"Mrs. Adrian," said Blakeman, "you are the best woman in this world, and have spoken with great truth."

Mrs. Adrian smiled knowingly, and the artist returned her smile without knowing why.

"And that fair woman standing by the Psyché," said her ladyship, "who is she? Her face has a history in it."

Mr. Blakeman ahemmed: "I can tell you, but my remarks may be in bad form. Yet, as you say, her face bears marks of a history, and I think I can tell you what that history is. Attention, every body." He continued:

"Her name is Mrs. Kate Dartmore. She came to

Paris just before the fall of the empire, and wished, above all things, to be presented. The brain of every dressmaker in the city was taxed to combine, devise, construct, fabricate—yes, I think that word fabricate will do—a toilette suitable to the lady's position. Her husband was a laboring man who had struck ore in—in somebody else's mine; her—yes, *his* enormous wealth, and her incomparable beauty, and——"

"Beauty!" echoed her ladyship, "that is the first time we have heard the word mentioned. Was she once beautiful?"

"As an angel," said he; "and now, even now—where was I?"

"There is just where you were," said Mrs. Adrian. "Her beauty——"

He breathed more freely.

"Her beauty, yes," he said. "Well, never mind about that—her dress——"

"Ah!" said her ladyship, "we are coming to that; what was it? but—I am not curious."

"Oh, no!" said Mr. Blakeman, "we are none of us *that*, but, as I said before, her dress was—well," desperately, "her dress finally had to be made in London."

"*No, impossible!*" said the ladies, in a breath.

"Why, how could that be?" said Mrs. Adrian.

"I will explain," said he gravely. "She finally decided that her dress should be made by some American dressmaker. It was to be of violet velvet, and her patriotism was so great that she wished even the material of American fabric. The train was

to be seven yards in length and lined with white kid. The *couturier* was desperate and refused the order. Her husband, more reasonable, explained why. 'How,' said he, 'can he line it with that? White kid, indeed! when there's none but black sheep to be found in the whole American colony in Paris?'"

He was interrupted with roars of laughter. Her ladyship thought if any husband was as witty as that the woman who was his wife ought to be well content.

"But the rest of my story," said the artist. "Her grief was real, and she took it so much to heart, not having both her patriotism and ambition gratified by getting what she wanted in Paris, that her beauty began to fade."

"Where was her dress finally made, or was it ever made?" said her ladyship.

"Yes," said the artist, "she was consoled by having it made in London. The dress was a success as the kid was made from some of Victoria's extra unfleeced. They had browsed in Hampton Court, had taken ten prizes at the Agricultural shows, and the Princess of Wales had hung a V. C. around the neck of the whitest—or the blackest, which was pronounced by all to be the fairest. In——"

Mrs. Adrian was convulsed with laughter.

"You forget, my friend, that you are speaking to an English lady, and I know Lord Beaufort will never forgive you."

"Indeed, Mrs. Adrian," said the Earl, "I would not have the gentleman spoil his story for my sake for anything. Pray let us hear some more."

"I am dumb," said the artist, "but if her ladyship has had enough celebrities pointed out, I will stop here."

"No," said the lady, "I must ask who that distingué man is near the heroine of the dress?"

"That," said he, "is Mr. Tom Darvis, an indefatigable society man, and as welcome in a *soirée* as iced champagne. Do not lose your heart, my lady. He is a woman-hater. Not woman-hater, but a perfect *connaisseur des femmes.*"

"That," interrupted Miss Leslie "is impossible! No man is a *perfect* anything."

The gentlemen bowed.

"An ungracious speech from Miss Leslie," said the Earl to her, in a low voice, "is more welcome than a compliment from another."

Mrs. Adrian was then heard to remark:

"Countess Costanza Gianetti! Why, certainly, she is most charming, and is the wife of that gentleman who has so many medals. He is first aide-de-camp to the Crown Prince of Italy, and she is one of the amiable Americans who make the Italian capital so agreeable a place of sojourn for her compatriots. The beautiful blonde is Miss Royles, a California millionnaire heiress; and that slender girl in the corner——"

"She's almost pretty," interrupted her ladyship.

"So-so," she said, with indifference. "She's nice enough, but wishes to be a singer."

"An *Opera* singer?" said the lady, in horror.

"Even so," she responded, "but she has many lukewarm friends in Paris. She is not sought after

at all in society, because she has little or no money. The Minister and his wife are very kind to her. She was recommended to them, and they seem also to like her. Of course, she is not overwhelmed with attention from anybody on account of the fact before mentioned. The fact is, it is impossible to go in good American society in Paris unless one is very rich. One must——"

"Stop," said Gratiot, laughing; "I have often heard you say that. Many are not wealthy. How do they succeed, Blakeman?——"

"I," said he, gaily; "I? me? Why, I have expectations, I paint pictures, and I always manage to have rich friends, and never to be seen but *with them* in their company!"

Impossible not to recognize the rare discernment of the artist.

"Well," said Mrs. Adrian, "every one in this room is distinguished for something. Those ladies there have an invaluable father. His chemical business is colossal. His chemicals are poor, but the business is good. They claim a descent from something, and the motto on their adopted coat-of-arms is: 'I die, but never change color.' That lady near them," indicating all three, "was a widow, and has married a man once a miner, who has discovered a lake of silver in Nevada. She mingles with the throng quite as simply as if her husband did not *intend* being the richest man in the world."

"Ah! what rare intelligence and simplicity!" said the Lady Eleanor, sweetly.

"The young ladies," said Mrs. Adrian, "come

from the Far West. Their social position is now assured. The father, *on dit*, was once a prize-fighter, and when he ran for Mayor of C——, no one dared *personally* to go against him. He is now editor of a large journal, and having no more political prestige, thinks strongly, it is said, of returning to the profession of his youth. You know, "*l'on revient toujours à ses premières amours.*"

Just then the attention of the little gathering was attracted by the appearance of an immensely corpulent woman who forced her way through the throng, scattering everybody to the right and left, as a seventy-four gun ship under full sail would a fleet of small boats across her bows. She had under her arm a rather pretty girl, whom she dragged along as—to continue the figure—a big ship would a little tug. Her dull gray eyes were protruding, fishy, and spectacled. Her mouth large, coarse, sensual, cruel; her vast cheek in folds, her neck a series of superabundant flesh overlaying like the scales of an alligator, her walk a waddle, her bust a vast mass that projected like a swell in the side of a mountain. As she thus sailed along, she attracted universal attention from every quarter of the crowded apartments.

"Mon Dieu! who is that an—lady?" ejaculated the Earl, as she swept by him and nearly carried him from his feet.

"That?" replied Allani, "that is the celebrated Mrs. Sanglier."

"And what may be her *métier?*"

"Oh, the pen."

"Pen? what kind of a pen? Not the pen in which are herded certain quadrupeds?"

"You are deceived by her appearance. It is not that kind of a pen. It is that pen which is said to be 'mightier than the sword.' She writes for the papers, and her pen acts like what veterinary surgeons call a 'seton'—she employs it in drawing off the venom from her system, which would otherwise poison her."

"For shame!" said the gentle Ethel.

"Possibly. But true, all the same. I must give you the facts. You would not like me to deceive you, *mais allons.* She has a slight official connection, which she uses for securing scandals for publication. She hates everybody, but is the toady of a rich resident of the American colony. She hates her as she does all the world, but writes pæans to her, so that she may be invited to her entertainments, and because she has a sympathy for the auriferous yellow (the tint of envy) of the atmosphere which envelops the presence of the millionnaire. Some day she will bite herself, and then the world will hear of another death from blood-poisoning. But, ta-ta to this subject. I feel as if I were handling a toad. Let's change it. My mouth is already blistered."

"You are too cruel!" said the ladies, and then the subject was dropped.

What a world of people! Mrs. Adrian just then bowed to a handsome couple who seemed to carry happiness about with them, their faces were so animated. It was Mrs. Florence Rice, the well known contralto, and her charming husband. There was

another lady with two beautiful girls, who walked with the grace of a Braganza. "Spanish-American," said Mr. Gratiot; "Madame Cardoza and her daughters."

It would be impossible to name every one present. The "wee sma' hours" of the morning were near at hand, although as fast as one went away, others came. A Minister's reception in Paris is a serious thing. It seems unending. Lady Eleanor came up to say good night.

"I have just heard such a good thing! Listen," said Mr. Allani. "That young lady in violet moire is Miss Fanny Stanford, of Chicago. She had been ten years in a finishing school in New York, and came home with her education complete. Her friends said that no young lady in America could manage a train as well as she. At her first ball in her native city, some one, speaking of Europe, said that they had seen Minister X. in a box at the Opera. 'A minister,' she shrieked, 'at the theatre! 'Yes.' Her guest (who had travelled) with some surprise explained: 'Yes, Miss Fanny, a Minister, but Plenipotentiary.' That last was a crusher. Turning to her brother, she said in a loud voice: 'Plenipotentiary—well, what religion is that? I am sure I never even *heard* of it before.' Her brother explained, blushing; 'Oh you know, Fannie, minister for the penitentiary. You understand me!'

"Stop, stop," said Mrs. Adrian, laughing. "How can you talk so much scandal? but—it *is* funny."

"How much money did you say she had?" interrupted Beaufort, with an amused air.

"I didn't say she had any, responded Allani, but you have taken it for granted. She has ten thousand a year. Her father settled up the affairs of a defunct corporation, and now owns a saw-mill on the Mississippi." Mrs. Adrian made a final move. "We *must* go home, Ethel—come." Then they said adieu.

The Earl was happy. The memory of strange events rushed through his brain. He knew her at last, his idol, his beautiful incognita. He had been invited to call, and on the morrow he might see her again. Fate had indeed been kind. When he had said good-night, he returned to the supper-room. It was some time before he could get to the corner where he had been seated with Miss Leslie; but, patience, a *soirée* must end some time. Mrs. Washburne was still smiling in the salon, the tall form of the Minister, with his fine honest face, was seen beside her. All took away a pleasant souvenir of their reception, and many American hearts had been gladdened and made happier that evening. We may hate our compatriots, but no one is so utterly base as not to feel a throb of pleasure on hearing his native tongue spoken in a foreign land. We have all been young. A souvenir of childhood should be one of tender, even sacred reminiscence. What awakens it so quickly as the sound of one's own language spoken—a familiar accent, if not a familiar voice? Worldliness sometimes gives way to patriotism. Every one likes to be well received by his country's representative.

Brandon thought it was time to go. "One moment," said Beaufort, "and I will join you."

He looked cautiously about, then stepped nearer to the place where Miss Leslie had been seated. With the dexterity of Hermann, he stooped and picked up something. It was a jasmin flower with faded petals, trampled heart, and broken at the stem. Yet there was something still attractive about it. To get the fine odor that the Ottoman loves, we must crush the blossom ; but dearer than flower or perfume was the poor once-forsaken thing. She had caressed it. Brandon neared his kinsman and watched him curiously. Just as the Earl thrust it into his bosom their eyes met.

Beaufort colored almost painfully, but he only made a movement *en serrant sa trouvaille* more closely. He said softly, "My heart dictated and I followed its lead."

Brandon looked serious. Not a word was spoken until they were in the carriage, then he said, "Perhaps you were right. What does Owen Meredith think ?

> 'And I think in the lives of most women and men,
> There's a time when all things would go smooth and even,
> If only the dead knew the moment when
> To come back and be forgiven.'"

CHAPTER XVI.

LOVE.

When they reached home Beaufort spoke to his kinsman.

"Come," said he, "let us have a little talk; not a little but a lengthy, a serious conversation, if you will, unless you are too tired and wish to say good night."

Athol looked at him affectionately. "I was almost going to ask it of you," he said, "so you know with what readiness I consent to your suggestion."

The hotel was not dull as some houses are when the family has gone to a ball, the fires had gone down, and not a servant was to be found for love or money. On the contrary, everything looked most inviting. Bell, with rare thoughtfulness, had a *petit souper* arranged on a table in the smoking-room; there was wine, cigars, and, more comforting than all, some fine old brandy, and bottles of soda water. The curtains were drawn, the fire was blazing in an open grate, and the room had an air of comfort positively inviting. Beaufort hastily drank some of his favorite beverage at that late hour of the morning. It was not very late, however, and the clock had

but just struck one hour after midnight, or maybe it had passed the half-hour, surely no more than that. Athol also had some brandy and soda water; then, taking cigars, they drew up before the fire to talk. It is a mistaken idea that only women have this habit. They have dainty feet to place on the fender, slim ankles to peep forth from their lace petticoats, and they bend their forms to the movement of an undulating chair, with bright eyes fixed on the glowing embers. Men do all this minus the petticoats, not showing the ankles, and not swaying back and forth in their seats; but fixing their eyes on the fire and lending themselves with quite as much facility to the charm of having a "good talk." Brandon commenced the conversation. He looked at the Earl and then said, questioningly:

"Well," as much as to say, "I am ready and listening."

"What do you think of her?" said Beaufort, abruptly.

"By her, you mean, of course, Miss Leslie?" he answered quietly.

"Naturally," said the Earl; "who but she is ever in my thoughts now?"

"She is certainly most lovely," said his kinsman, "and I should say also very intelligent. Her manners—in fact, dear Francis, you have not exaggerated her appearance in the slightest; but——"

"But what?" said the Earl, quickly.

"I wish you had never met her. I can find nothing against her. She seems in every way correct; but I could scarcely realize," he continued, quickly,

"on looking at her, that her life holds a secret and that all you have told me has positively taken place. I must say I think her a very dangerous woman to be intimate with ; and I would to God that she had never crossed your path."

Athol replied seriously and with infinite sweetness of tone. "I realize all that you say, yet it is too late to help myself. I confess that I love her as I have never loved before—as never man loved before. She has so completely enthralled my being and my senses, that I am scarcely master of either in her presence. I think of her twenty-four hours in the day ; I think of her sixty minutes of the hour ; I think of her sixty seconds of every minute. I would give everything I possess, at this moment, to call her mine, and would consider no sacrifice could it but bring me nearer to her. I would go to the end of the world to serve her, and I would lay down my very life at her feet. What makes me most unhappy, for I cannot call it a *felicitous* business as yet, is that my mind is torn by conflicting emotions. Do not think," he continued, hastily, "that I can ever love her less ; on the contrary, the light of that passion burns a fixed flame in my heart. But I sometimes doubt her, and I sometimes have a bad opinion of her, albeit I never *love* her less. This to me is torture. I have always worn in my breast an ideal woman whose moral beauty and virtues would equal her physical charms, whose life should be a clean, unsullied page, whose virginal eyes would look their first glance of love into mine.

"How is my dream realized ? I have found more

than I had ever hoped as regards personal beauty, but the rest—what can I say of the rest? Her intelligence is undoubted, her repartee is the very essence of refinement; but her life is a double one, her heart holds another image, and a mystery that presents a most unattractive face enslaves her mind as well as body. Is she maid, mistress, or wife? How often have I asked myself these questions! how often does only the hollow echo of my own heart make answer; and yet I love her. I love the soft fascination of her manner when she is tender. I love her shapely head when she throws it up in unconscious hauteur. I love the dark hair that caresses her neck. I love the violet-hazel eyes that imprison so many fires. I love the slender hands that toy with her rings, fan, or her handkerchief. I love her witching gowns that fall in voluptuous harmony about her body. I love her smile, whether grave, gay, or sarcastic. I love every minute particle of herself. I love everything she looks upon, and every object that her hand touches. In short, I love her madly. devotedly, desperately; and instead of being happy in thus loving, as I once dared to anticipate and hope, I am wretched, I am wretched, and the earth does not hold another so miserable a creature as I am!

"Do you know," continued he, looking at his cousin with almost fierce despair; "do you know the depth of such a passion as mine? To think, think, think all day upon one object; to have one name running constantly in your thoughts; to go to bed at night still thinking on the same subject; to watch the stars fade with sleeplessness and, when the long,

weary hours of the night have worn themselves away, to finally lose one's self only to dream of the fatal sorceress ; to dream heavily ; to dream lightly ; to see her in visions of brightness ; to see her in robes of sorrow and night ; to see her with another; then to clasp to one's breast a lovely being ; to live perhaps hours of ecstasy in a single moment ; to feel one's arms about a thing of softest, most sensuous clay ; to see it recede and pale into a vision of amber light ; to call to it 'return ! come back ! ' to awake just as the last hem of a garment has faded into the oblivion of nothingness; to know that it has been only a dream ; to feel your heart throbbing, a sickening sensation run electric like through the senses ; to feel a choking in your throat; to feel your blood tingling; to hear echo and echo again through your brain one name, one and always the same, that of the loved object; to find one's self alone, yet not alone, tortured yet enthralled, happy yet miserable; to look forward to the coming of another day; to watch the sun rise on one's hopes as it set on them the night before; to be in short, in love, madly, hopelessly in love as I am—this is my condition ! "

The Earl finished, and bowed his head in his hands. Athol rose softly and went toward him. He took his hands from his face, as a mother might have done, with all a mother's tenderness. He smoothed his hair, his fingers touched his shoulder instinctively, then he took both his kinsman's hands in his, and looked him tenderly in the eye.

"Dear old fellow, dear old boy," said he, soothingly ; "has it really come to this ? What can

I say to console you? What can I do to help you? Will you trust in me? Remember that since we played together as children, I have known but one friendship, you are that friend. I love you as a brother. Let me be that brother. The dearest feelings of my soul are tuned in accord with yours, and we have grown up together, entwining our affections as young vines do their tendrils, scarce knowing in the end which is the parent stem. I have always thought of you as the best part of myself, and my grief is beyond all words to see you in this state. It is not that one should not love, and that another would not take this to heart as you do. But in your position, with your ideas of honor, and honorable affections, the doubt that you love unworthily is most terrible. It seems a death-blow to all hope, and yet, what is to be done? Could you, can you, will you forget her?"

"Forget her!" he started, angrily, then settled back in his chair with a deep sigh. "Forget her!" he repeated; "you know not what you ask. God knows I believe I would if I could. But, no; why should I? Am I not free, free to love?"

"Yes," responded his cousin, "you are free; but is she?—free to *love*, perhaps, but——"

"If she be free," interrupted Beaufort, "I would marry her to-morrow."

"Perhaps," said Athol, slowly, "she may be free, might be free to love, but *not* to marry."

Beaufort paled. "You mean——" he said, faintly.

"I mean," said Brandon, boldly, "that I think she is married already."

The Earl started from his chair.

"It cannot be possible!" he said, half-doubtingly.

"After having seen the lady," Brandon answered, slowly, "I do her the justice to say that I think she is a wedded wife. I could not think otherwise, nor can I conceive how you can think other than I do. We may both be deceived—she may be as guilty as another, but I cannot find it in my heart to class her with those to whom reputation is a myth, honesty a farce, and intrigue the bread and meat of daily life. Now, my dear boy, let us talk reasonably. Considering, as we do, that the lady is married—probably secretly—what can be your future course of action in the matter? You certainly cannot count upon keeping up this farce of playing attendant any longer; you love her too well. Why not bide your time, await the course of events, if you will, meet her—meet her in society; but do commence to tell yourself that you love hopelessly (at least for aught you know at present to the contrary), and struggle to bear it like a man. Believe me, that sooner or later, your own common sense will come to the rescue; you will be able to look upon her as upon all other women, and gradually this mad passion will wear itself out."

Beaufort looked at him as he ceased speaking. Then he said, half aloud, as if communing with himself:

"And you think this is possible? You thought you knew me? I admit that you speak in reason; but I feel, I know I can never separate my mind from thoughts of her. A man meets many women

in his day; he learns the value of their slightest smile; he knows how to weigh their coquetry to the slightest hair; he knows, above all, whether he has aught in common with them; but when he sees the one woman of all the world destined to make him the happiest or most miserable of men, the vulnerable spot in his heart receives an impression which is indelible. Struggle as he may against it, the fiat of fate has gone forth, and he recognizes in that person his controlling destiny. I tried hard to persuade myself that I was not in love, that I was only puzzled as to the probable outcome of a singular adventure, but in vain. Were I to tell the truth, 'tis this: that from the first moment I saw her, I have loved her; no one else has been in my mind or heart, and I feel that no one else ever will be. Also, you must make great allowances for the way in which I know her. Thinking me a companion or sort of confidential attendant, her manner is simplicity itself. She never practises any airs or graces with me; she does nothing to attract my attention; she ignores me and my existence in the most absolute manner; and one cannot accuse her of throwing herself at any one's head. She was but civil tonight, at the Legation; and, although her aunt was amiable, I can scarcely say that mademoiselle cares ever to see me again. Courtesy demands that we leave our cards, and beyond that, who knows what may happen? We got fairly well acquainted, when I allowed some idiotic sentimentalism to upset me."

"What was it?" asked Brandon.

"I asked her for a flower that fell from her bouquet.

She said I might keep it, as it was perfectly indifferent to her what became of it. She said: 'Why should one broken flower interest me more than another? I will throw these all away when I get home. I will have others to-morrow, and will throw them away likewise; also the next, and the next.' Strange words, were they not? They repelled, while fascinating me; yet I listened to her as if her very breath were honey; and but to hear her speak, she might say anything. My heart could not but beat faster upon hearing even the sound of her voice. *A propos*, I had one shock She told me that my voice sounded familiar to her. I must disguise it better the next time I go."

"The *next* time!" said Brandon, quickly; "you surely would never dare go again, even should she ask, now that you have met her."

"I *will* go again," he said, with firmness, "once at least, and after that we shall see. I shall promise nothing hastily."

Brandon looked seriously at him.

"Dear Francis," he said, "have I no influence over you? Can I not persuade you *not* to go again? Pray, pray think of yourself, think of your mother, think of your sister, and think of the terrible risk you run, now that you know her. If she should by any means discover your double dealing, your chances of obtaining her affection seem to me for ever lost. Then should this secret, which now seems doubly secret, be explained away, and to her credit, your own headstrong folly will have lost you all. I am not holding out false hope, but stranger things

than these have happened; and God knows I should be glad to prove her the best and most virtuous of women. As Meredith says, 'the world is full of folly and sin.' She may be a victim, but you cannot help her cause by injuring your own, on the contrary; and if she be not one, I pray you in God's name to cease these visits to the Latin Quarter. I do not say, see as little of each other as possible in society; again, on the contrary, through this medium you may best know her. A true woman shows in the world as does a diamond when a strong light is flashed upon it. Darkness may prove it a pure gem; but it is only under the most penetrating of the noontide rays that just appreciation may be rendered as to its real worth. In the great maelstrom, then, called the world, where false mingle with true, where real worth jostles with artificial, where truth is sometimes truth, as falsehood is sometimes less than falsehood, there study, appreciate, and love, if you cannot help yourself, your heart's idol. I can give you no better advice. I only beg you to be reasonable and to spare yourself the shame of learning, by means unbecoming a gentleman, aught of a secret which appears, at present, most unpalatable, but which I trust, in the course of time, must come to an unravelling which will redound to the lady's fame and credit."

"Do you see *how* that can be?" asked Beaufort, abruptly.

"I have gone well over all that you have told me in my mind," Brandon said, quietly, "and frankly, had I not seen Miss Leslie, I would have thought much

worse about the whole affair ; now that I have seen her, that her position in the world is so well defined, I am at a loss to understand it, and I humbly confess that the circumstances are no more in her favor than they were before ; but she herself inspires confidence, and I hope that some honorable solution of the mystery may yet be made public."

"You hope," said the Earl, "that she is married."

"Yes," Brandon answered.

"Well, and I," said his kinsman, "I *hope* that she is not. I shall try to win her, and the purity of my soul shall make up for that which is cloudy in her life. My love is noble, it cannot but ennoble her. My love is honorable, it cannot but do her honor. If she but bury her past, my great love will cause me to shut my eyes to it, and the future, which belongs to the poor as well as the rich, shall prove that I am right to give all or nothing to my heart's desire, my passion——"

"Your passion," interrupted Brandon, "is just what I supposed it would be ! I am glad that you give the right name to your caprice. Why should we deny to ourselves what men really are ? we, who have lived and know how the strongest fetters, in the end, wear away the chain ? You say you love her now, very possibly—but how can you say what it will be five years hence ? There may still remain some affection, some friendship, unless the final separation is reached by the means of a horrible scandal."

"How can you," said the Earl, half angrily, "be so *blasé* and heartless ? You think, then, that I am

not in love, but that I have only a caprice or fleeting passion for Miss Leslie?"

"It looks very much like that to me," said his cousin, calmly.

Beaufort started to his feet angrily and said: "It may *look* like that to you now, but I will prove the contrary to you. I shall never marry if I cannot marry her, and I am determined to get at the bottom of this mystery. She asked me to call, and although the invitation was not given with *empressement*, I accepted just the same." He grew less excited and said more humbly to Brandon: "I will give up my visits to the Latin Quarter after Thursday night. I must go once more; but do not fear, I shall disguise myself a little more, and detection will be impossible. Do not dissuade me from this. I realize the truth of all that you have said, with one exception: My love for Miss Leslie is not a passion, but a pure affection, which can only cease when I cease to be. I am willing to follow any reasonable advice, but do not attempt to counsel me against my heart's dearest sentiments. Good night, dear friend, and thanks. May you never know the misery of a hopeless love like mine, as I sometimes feel mine to be; for my great and only fear is, that she loves another."

The young men looked each other in the eyes. Beaufort's face was inexpressibly sad, and Brandon's was overcast with painful reflection. He put his hand on his cousin's shoulder and spoke with great tenderness to him:

"Good night, dearest friend, loved kinsman, and

may peace gently nestle in your bosom. Love her, if you will, but do not forget that I am near, a friend, counsellor, and brother. I would give my life that this bad business had never come about. I can now only help and comfort you. Forgive me, if I have pained you by my plain speaking. We have had our first, and probably last, conversation on the subject; but, believe me, that now and ever, I have only your happiness at heart, and God knows, I wish that the future may grow brighter to you. Again, good night! Let us live in hope."

He smiled as he spoke and opened his arms. The Earl staggered, so great was his emotion, but like a weary and heart-sick child, he bowed his head on his kinsman's heart. A moment passed, and Brandon could hear the violent throbbing of his heart, the deep breath that came and went, and the laborious pulsations of the life-blood that beat back and forth through the veins. It was loud at first, then gradually grew softer, softer, as the night breeze that loses itself so completely that only silence rests between it and nothing. He remained thus a moment, two, perhaps even three, until his emotion was spent, then, lifting his head, he withdrew from his kinsman's embrace. A silent hand-clasp, a grateful look of truthfulness, a faint "*à demain*," and he was gone.

Wednesday passed, and the half engagement to dine with the Count Vandalin was broken. Beaufort spent the day in his apartment, and when night came, a *coiffeur* from the Rue St. Honoré came to his room. Later, a gentleman in a costume of homespun,

with glasses, and a foulard about his neck, hastily quitted the house. It was the attendant Felden, a little changed from the preceding days. A beard was slightly perceptible on his cheek, and his dress was of a cut that Poole would have scorned. He was going to his rendezvous at the Avenue Matignon.

At about midnight Lord Beaufort knocked on the door of Brandon's room. It opened, and he found his kinsman deep in a mass of correspondence, but glad to be interrupted by Beaufort. The Earl handed him a letter written on ordinary paper.

"Read," said he, "and see if this will do." Athol Brandon took the missive in his hand. It ran:

"MADEMOISELLE LESLIE:

"Esteemed Madame—I am obliged to leave Paris at an hour's notice, owing to a serious illness in my family. It is impossible to say when I return, as I must go to Russia. I am deeply distressed in every way by this *contretemps*, and trust that Madame will suffer no inconvenience in replacing me. I have been most honored to serve Madame, and would be proud to resume my position if, on my return, Madame needs my services. My address is always the same, Hotel Meurice, and I will have the honor, if Madame will permit me, to notify her about the time that I am likely to return. With expressions of the deepest respect, I beg, Madame, to accept the *hommages* and devotion of her most faithful and obedient servant,

"FRANÇOIS FELDEN."

Brandon read, then a smile broke over his face. He seized the Earl's hand and said, "God bless you, and thanks; but do you mean it?"

"Do I mean it?" repeated his cousin. "Yes, and to prove to you that I am in earnest, you shall send the note yourself."

Brandon looked curiously at him, and said, questioningly, "You have been to the Latin Quarter?"

"I have been," said Beaufort, briefly, "and I hope I may never go again. Ask me no questions, but this night's experience has decided me. I never dare repeat it."

Brandon spoke eagerly. "Shall we leave Paris?" His kinsman looked up doggedly.

"No," he said, "we do not leave Paris." Then he laughed with bitterness, and repeated, emphatically, "We do not leave Paris, but I go no more to Rue St. Père. I have now determined to only meet my inamorata in her proper sphere, society. Her masquerading no longer interests me. She is probably married, and I have found the highways and byways of high life more than appropriate for the propagation of secret passions. There are plenty of Michel Stenos to write, on even a duke's chair, '*Marin falliero dalla bella moglie, Altri la gode ed egli la mantiene.*' The fault is not in the sentiment, but the indecency lies in making it public. Let us follow the ladies' example, and say '*en cachette.*'"

CHAPTER XVII.

BREAKFAST AT THE COUNT'S.

COUNT LÉON VANDALIN was of Hungarian birth and extraction. A liberal education in England, France, Germany, and Switzerland had made him a complete cosmopolitan. He spoke French, German, Italian and English with the most extraordinary facility; and his comprehension of the various tongues was so minute and perfect that it was impossible for a stranger to divine his real nationality. Then, too, his accent helped to the general illusion, and in fact, the French swore he was a Frenchman, Germans avowed him a Teuton, while no one in England ever doubted that he was a British subject. He had recently married Mademoiselle Isaure de M——, a scion of one of the oldest families in Normandy, and it would be impossible to meet a more united or happier couple. Their apartment in the Avenue de Messine was as charming as could be found in the Quartier Monceau; the rooms were large, but the quantity of beautiful tapestry and bric-à-brac made them seem smaller but more "*signorile.*" The magnificent paintings were, some of them, family portraits, and others of relatives and

friends, many painted by Count Léon's father, the Count André, one of the greatest talents of the day. From Countess Isaure's boudoir to the husband's "den," as he called his *fumoir*, the house was perfect, and a model of good taste.

The Count also painted *en amateur*, and always had something on hand. It might be a panel of some fair Gretchen, a Cupid in full undress on a fan, a sketch of the family château near Belclairy, a flower, a phantasy, anything in fact, but always something. Léon Vandalin might have passed his thirtieth summer, but certainly not more. He was a fine-grained gentleman, as was his father, and his father's before him. I might save complication by saying his grandfather, but that would look too intimate, so let us leave it in the orthodox fashion. He was blonde, handsome, *very* handsome, with a face of the Slavonian type. His eyes were blue, his hair chestnut, and his beard an ashen blonde, almost golden; and his features were well cut and extremely aristocratic. It would be impossible for any one to feel dull in his presence. He had the happiest disposition in the world, a keen sense of humor, besides being a thoroughly good fellow. To tell the truth, I don't think one ever saw him ten minutes without hearing a hearty roar, for he laughed easily and contagiously. He is so good-humored and takes life so very lazily, that he is dubbed "Prince de la Mollasse" by all his friends, and the name seems to suit. He is quite *au fait* in the best of society; a *beau raconteur*, and never enters or leaves a room but the nearest will ask, "Who is that gentleman?"

He carries a perfect train of pleasant association with him, and without ever seeming to accomplish much he is always busy. His occupation may be summed up in the words a "gentlemanly *homme du monde.*" With taste, leisure, and means enough to gratify his ambition, a round of duties that the devotee to fashion cannot ignore, each hour in the day has its special allotment.

How could he be otherwise than a busy man? Yet all this is accomplished in so *insouciant* a way that he still has oceans of time on his hands, and is called "Prince de la Mollasse" to slightly hint that he is lazy.

The salon wore its cosiest aspect. A cheerful fire tempered the room to a delightful heat, and made everything look still more cheerful. It was storming without—a cold November day, when sleet, rain, and hail struggle for ascendancy, when Paris is as gloomy as any other city, and when nature absolutely belies the almanac as to the seasons. Who could have the audacity to say that there ever could be spring or summer in the face of such abominable weather? How disgusting that it should be that of all others when there was to be a *déjeuner à la fourchette* with four extra covers! Who could come out in such vile weather? Yet no regrets had been received. The Count was pacing up and down the salon, when a ring was heard. In another moment, Mademoiselle Leslie appeared on the threshold. He uttered an exclamation of pleasure, and started forward with eager outstretched hands.

"How good of you to come! Isaure has been

fearing an excuse every time we have heard the bell; but, if you could brave the weather, the gentlemen will surely not fail us."

She stopped and looked admiringly about.

"How perfectly charming this is! 'Come?' Of *course* I would come. You know I never miss an opportunity to see Isaure."

"And me?" he said, with a smile.

"You will never be ignored," she said, lightly, "while you are even the worst half of so dear a woman as your lovely wife."

A door opened, and Countess Vandalin appeared. Her first word was to her husband.

"I must scold, for you were going to keep her with you, when *I* am waiting. My dear friend (to Ethel), come with me to my room, and we can have a little talk before breakfast."

The two ladies retired, leaving the Count pacing up and down before the fire.

A sharp ring at the outer door a few moments later, announced the probable arrival of the other expected guests, and the Countess was relieved. She embraced Ethel, and kissed her upon both cheeks, in French fashion, then they went into her boudoir. Ethel was so much at home, that she knew the ins and outs of the whole house, but she nevertheless permitted the smart maid to take her things, and was as impassive in her hands as any stranger might have been. When she was quite relieved of her wraps, they went into "My lady's chamber," where the polished mirrors reflected the green velvet hangings. Fresh flowers bloomed in *jardinières*, and the

white *toilette*, with its lace, and satin bows, and number of glittering gold and ivory boxes, reminded one of a virginal beauty's table at a fancy fair.

"This pretty room!" said Mademoiselle, looking contentedly about. "I do think, Isaure, that you have the very cosiest home in all Paris. Indeed! I must love you, to come out such a day as this! Do you suppose that the fine weather is all finished?"

"Finished?" echoed her friend. "No, certainly not, although one might think to-day a foretaste of winter in good earnest. But how kind of you to come, how *gentille!* I am going to keep you all day. And Madame Adrian? Is she not well? Why did she not come too?"

"My dear," interrupted Ethel, "she could not, and sends her best excuse. This is Friday, and mail day by the Havre steamer, and there were so many letters to write. She is as American as ever, and would not miss this weekly communing with her dear ones for a great deal. She is *so* good, and in fact, keeps up my acquaintance for me, otherwise I would not have a friend left. I am a poor letter-writer, and, I suppose, even the most devoted correspondent in time gives up one who never answers one's favors. But, dear friend, where were you Tuesday night? Such a charming reception, such nice people, and your dear presence the only thing lacking to make the evening a perfect one in my eyes."

Countess Isaure answered quickly: "My love, I had a terrible cold, and did not dare go out; but the next time I shall not fail. Whom did you meet? Did you look lovely, and how were you dressed?"

"*Ma chère*," she expostulates, "one thing at a time. I met some old acquaintances and made three new ones. I looked, I suppose, much as usual, and my dress was one of my prettiest."

"Have I seen it?" she asked, interestedly.

"Yes, its counterfeit. It is in *turquoise faille*, but it's made the very counterpart of your lovely Vienna dress in green satin with the *crêpe* and crush roses."

"How nice! And Delannoy made it?"

"Yes."

"Where," said the lady, walking up and down, "did she put the roses? heavily on the skirt, bottom or top? Were there many on the corsage? You were *décolletée*, of course (with the accent of a prime minister dictating to his cabinet), and, I hope, love, for *your* sake, that not the slightest thing was *manquée*. Your toilette was *en train*, naturally?"

Mademoiselle laughed desperately.

"More *en train* than I was. In fact, I did not feel a bit like going out, but Aunt insisted, and—now that I think of it, am not sorry that we went."

"*Now* that you think of it! What does that mean?" Ethel spoke frankly.

"I met some nice people."

"Americans?"

"No, English."

The Countess half started.

"English?" then to herself, "how *drôle si cela se pouvait être*," and then aloud, "any one I know?"

"My dearest friend, how can I tell? Perhaps!"

"I have an idea," said the countess, in her liveliest

voice, "and a presentiment that I really *do* know the one you met——"

"Dear wife!" called out a voice, "everybody is here, myself with everybody, and we are waiting; then, most important of all, breakfast is waiting."

They went at once to the salon; and he continued:

"Yes, waiting, and the only thing I know of *qui ne vient pas à point à qui fait attendre*, is a hot breakfast, a good dinner, and the rent that indignant tenants have a way of keeping back for a late *bonne bouche*, the following season, say."

Impossible not to laugh at Count Léon's irrepressible humor. What a happy way he had of putting everybody *en rapport* with himself! Then there were presentations to be gone through with, but to his surprise, one of his guests started with an exclamation of real pleasure.

"Mademoiselle! Is it possible? what good fortune to meet you here! How do you feel after the reception? I remember you complained of having been a little *souffrante*, an——"

"*Mon cher*," said the Count, "and you knew our friend all this time without having told me? What can one say?" In a moment it was explained how they had met at the house of the American Minister, and only on Tuesday last.

The butler threw open the door of the *salle à manger*, and the party went in to breakfast. A French *déjeuner* is usually an agreeable way of bringing people together, and a not unimportant part is the breakfast itself. A *chef* with any conscience will

put before one the most appetizing nothings in the way of *hors-d'œuvre*, to tempt the *blasé* palate. He will hide, disguise, and conceal an ordinary lamb chop with coquettish greens and peas, so young and tender that they look like atoms of the vegetable. His potatoes will be fried to such perfection that each slice could be made to do duty in a guard of honor. His capon will have turned so many times upon the spit, that even the gravy wears a blush. His beefsteak will know neither hard-heartedness nor remorse; his little pinch of radishes will peep out from their nest of cresses; the sober olive will garnish an anchovy pâté; the omelette will look like a golden cow-slip (not egg-plant) in a country meadow; his *salad* of romaine, celery, and sliced tomatoes will be a bowl of perfection, and his dessert, with the various things *soufflées* wins him the title of chevalier of the Legion *d'honneur* long before his patrons' bank account runs out. Oh, the brains of these French cooks, and the use they make of them to benefit mankind! What a thing to breakfast or dine off plenty, to feel as if one had eaten nothing, and yet to leave the table satisfied! That is perhaps one of the secrets of success in life.

The *déjeuner* was not hurried through, and only the Countess seemed unable to do justice to her *cordon bleu*. She was "not a bit hungry," she said, and one could readily believe her. Such trifling with toast, such complete indifference toward the choicest dishes, and such a flagrant lack of appetite, almost put a damper upon the others. Beaufort, of course, could not eat for looking at Miss Leslie; and Brandon felt

himself almost obliged to follow the example of the Countess. But Count Léon did ample justice to the repast. He excused himself by saying that, as Isaure ate nothing, he was obliged to perform the double duty of cup-taster and host, otherwise their guests might suspect a concealed poison in the viands.

Beaufort assured the Count that he was not yet quite certain that there had been no designs upon them.

"*A propos*," he said, "what is the surprise and where is *it?*"

"Ungrateful one!" said his host, "It is beside you. You are beside yourself, as well as beside it. Who other could it be than Mademoiselle Leslie? *Das Mädchen, meine liebe freunde*, etc., etc." Beaufort breathed anew:

"I feared," said he, "that the concealed bitter would be some prodigy in the musical line. Heaven be praised! my fears were groundless. Not but what any one I had the honor to meet at your house it would give me pleasure to see; but since my last morning to meet a surprise, I have been in mortal terror lest I may again encounter a duenna with her musical prodigy."

"Yes, yes!" laughed Vandalin, "I know them." And then, mimicking to perfection, he commenced: "'She could sing,' says the duenna, 'before she could talk. At three years of age she surprised—a nightingale in her bedroom, come to——'"

"For shame, Léon!" said his wife, "how can you be so shocking?"

"I protest," he says stoutly, "and will finish my description. 'At eight, she was put upon a table to sing for royalty. She was decorated by the Lord High Chamberlain of the palace with the order of the—garter. Commencing young, you see.'"

"Léon! Léon!" interrupts madam.

"I will be heard," he said, and continued: "'Of the garter. At twelve she is called 'the baby prodigy,' at fourteen she has lost her voice. A world waits two years until it returns. She appears again. In the meantime, you understand,' severely, 'that *I* have been obliged to watch over her, sleeping and waking. Her decorations are in a bonded warehouse, but her reputation is safe.

"'At sixteen,' she continues, 'we started out on a tour of the world. I cannot tell you the triumphs that are showered upon us; nor will you ever appreciate the modesty of that child. *She* scorns applause and attention, and I am obliged, just for appearance's sake, to accept only that which is *de rigueur* from the highest and richest in the land, and to keep off the others with a red-hot branding iron.

"'In England, she sang before the Queen. Her ten-pound note (do not think it a trifle, I beg; Neither Rubenstein, Grisi, Mario, or Patti ever got any more) and a locket with the effigy of music stamped on a star with the Prince Consort, are brilliant and overwhelming tributes to her genius and beauty. At the Crystal Palace, the crowds were so great to hear (not on a shilling day) that four ladies fainted, and the police refused any more admissions. The Electric Light Photographers' Union

sent their special artists to catch the varied emotions of her features while singing, and if you care (I do not always *do* this) to have it——'"

"'Oh, madame!' I murmur, 'I have not *lived* until to-day!'

"'Thanks, so many!' she continues, 'I will send it to you. No—stay, I think, yes, I am *quite* sure I have one in my pocket. It *was* intended'—mysteriously—'for a private cut in *La Vie Parisienne*, but you shall have it. Only'—with a giddy, gurgling giggle—'don't tell any one that I have put you above all the others. Aurelian (or Cornelian, or whatever her name may be) would be *so disconcerted.* As to——'"

"Léon, I insist," said his wife, "that you stop traducing prodigies and their duennas. How can you go on so?" Everybody was shrieking with laughter.

"No," said Beaufort, "I insist on his going on. It's too jolly, you know, and how inimitably he takes them off."

The Countess was inexorable. "No, *non*, and no;" they would go to the library for black coffee, and, suiting the action to the word, the *salle à manger* was abandoned.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MAN AND WOMAN.

On their way the Countess stopped in the pretty salon.

"See," she said, "I have a new photograph—is it not charming? and, yes, I believe I have another that you have not seen."

"And—yes," said Count Léon, "that is the way with all women. Why don't you speak out at once. There are fifty new ones that she is dying to show you," turning to Miss Lèslie, "and I feel that there are at least ten new albums that she must see. Now that we are on the subject," continued the irrepressible Léon, "I may as well tell you that Isaure likes to have a collection of photographs—a small select collection of at least five hundred professional beauties and artists, besides minute reflections of her friends' faces. An enemy's face, even, is not despised, provided he present a smiling one to her. These are Vienna albums, and here are the Mora Manias."

Count Léon evidently appreciated his wife's love of photographs. Athol Brandon confessed to the same weakness, and Lord Beaufort came to the

ladies' aid. He also adored them, and announced his collection as a very choice one. Brandon remarked :

"Yes, choice, but not varied, as they are all beauties ; a dozen pictures of one person with their different *poses*, a dozen of another with equally striking attitudes, half a dozen—" Beaufort protests :

"You are traducing me," said Beaufort, "but I confess that some of the prettiest are repeated two or three times, and never, no, *never* have I ever exceeded that triniadial number."

"It reminds me," said Miss Leslie, laughing, "of our shocking game of poker. Three of a kind is not at all a bad hand, but I suppose one ought not to object to four, if one can get them."

"In your case," said Beaufort, "it would be impossible. You are the only one of the kind I ever saw ; but believe me, you will always play a winning game, no matter what the opposition hand."

She looked at him : "Do you think me, then, so clever ?" with a half laugh.

"Both clever and lucky," he responded, "but better than all that, beauty——"

She stopped him. "Is it then so much to be beautiful, my Lord ?"

"Yes, it is the first law of nature ; then, if one be lucky——"

"Do not say that," she interrupted, "I am anything but that."

"You are lucky at the outset," he answered, "in having so perfect an exterior that one should never care to go beyond it."

"Then," said she, half ironically, "you care only for external beauty."

"I am not saying," he answered, sharply, "what *I* care for; I am only speaking in a general sense; but if you should wish to know, yes, I acknowledge it, I should hate a woman to be a blue-stocking, and professional wits of your sex I hold in abhorrence. It may be a dreadful thing to say, but I should never ask too much of any woman. If she only look handsome I will forgive her a multitude of sins, as I suppose"—desperately—"one would have to. Then, too, I have made up my mind never to be attracted toward any one for her moral or mental worth only, I think one should be satisfied with physical beauty and a reasonable amount of the other qualities. Were one to love combined mental, physical, and moral loveliness, the loss of it in after life would be too terrible.

"Such a shock none but the strongest can overcome, and I am anything but strong. Why shock myself unnecessarily? But," laughing shortly, "I presume there is little danger of one ever coming in contact with such a *rara avis*. It is a terrible thing to love any one for her intelligence, one gets deeper in as the years go on. Personal beauty may fade, but rarely does the beauty of the mind grow less with advancing years; whereas one may adore at the shrine of *beauté personnelle*, and undoubtedly, with the flight of time, if outward charm has become less, association will have begotten some honest feeling, and habit, which they say is stronger than love, will already have secured its sinecure in personal affec-

tion. I am afraid," speaking a little uneasily, "that you find my views rather ultra. I once insisted that the object of my passion should possess every desirable mental, physical, and moral attribute. I now withdraw so much pretention. Provided I could be happy with a beautiful woman, did I but love her wholly, devotedly, and madly, what more should I ask?"

"I am not surprised," she responded, slowly, "at any sentiment a man of the world would utter, but am primitive enough to have imagined that love exacted much more from the object of its adoration. I see that women only take love *au sérieux;* woman only has the *hardiesse* to look for mental and moral worth in the object of her affection; to like a few personal charms, perhaps, but never to stake her all upon them."

"You are right also," he answered, hastily, "but the cases are not at all parallel. Men are rarely beautiful in person; and those qualities that are absolutely necessary to our sex are those which show least, because we are men, and they are expected of us. Man being the natural protector of woman, was born with a certain mental, moral, and physical strength, of which no account must be taken, as merely the accident of birth does not redound to his merit. Men must be honest, as they are the bulwarks of the world. They must have intellect, to appreciate and direct the great heritage of responsibility thrust upon them; and they should be moral enough to live with law, and without license."

"I am glad," she said, "that you think so much

of yourselves. You have every reason. Even the most despised, since nature cannot choose its origin, the accident of birth has undoubtedly thus far been in favor of the male portion of humanity."

"I half divine," said he, with a questioning accent, "that you do not believe all you have said, and that beyond your expressed ideal lurk other ideas and other convictions."

She looked up and said: "Dear my lord, what I said, undoubtedly I hoped to be the case. If you must know my *real* opinion, I shall give it. I warn you beforehand, do not be shocked. I think with yourself," looking steadily at him, "that personal beauty covers a multitude of sins. Woman should be forgiven for everything. You have striven to show me that nature has favored your sex in the greatest of all things, that which no earthly power can bestow. I will now tell you that with woman it is the reverse. Being made of one of Adam's worthless ribs, her origin must necessarily have been defective. Woman comes into the world so handicapped with original sin that, in after life, whatever she does should not be of moment. Her very vices become virtues when compared with the legacy of misery and meanness generously bestowed upon her by mother nature at the outset. I unhesitatingly forgive the frailty of my sex, for in that lies their strength. Women are, and from the first, what—what men make them."

"So," thought the Earl to himself, "she does not hesitate to acknowledge her guilt. Oh, the shame of loving so much shamelessness." Aloud, he said:

"Your sentiments savor of honesty, and like yourself, nothing that a woman of the world could say would surprise me. You have evidently thought deeply upon the subject to speak so positively."

"On the contrary, I haven't thought about it at all. The conviction came to me one day, and, having no opinion, I thought I might as well welcome the new comer. Then, too," with sincerity, "I—I believe what I say."

He added: "I believe that you believe what you say, and as I adore frankness, you must permit me to adore you. You have certainly been frank."

When this conversation commenced, they were near a small *étagère* loaded down with counterfeits of the fair sex. Countess Isaure, having so many other pictures to show in every part of the room, had disappeared long before Miss Leslie and the Earl had gotten into the depths of their confab. They found themselves quite alone, while from the inner room, a library, came the sounds of lively voices. She started to go toward the direction whence the voices came.

He stopped her: "You have not made me any answer yet," he said.

"You may adore my frankness if you like," she replied, "but not me. Any one may be frank, so there will be no special obligation on my part in permitting—what one cannot help; and the tribute you would pay any other woman it would be wrong to withhold from me, did I also possess the quality that commands it."

"I cannot cope with your reasoning," he laugh-

ingly answered, "but I understand one thing: that one may like any quality you may possess, but you yourself are not to be adored. Am I right?"

"Perfectly," she replied; "how well we understand each other."

"But," he hazards, "suppose I am interested in you, what then?"

"It is a supposition," she retorted.

"No, a fact."

"Then, my lord, I have nothing to say. Facts are indisputable, and, as I never confine myself to facts, I cannot dispute them."

"You are incorrigible," he answered; "but we are just where we were; that is to say, *I* am just where I was."

"Let us hope," she said, "that your stability may also be as fixed, and that years hence you will be just where you are now."

"Is that your wish?" he said, curtly.

"My wish?" innocently, "those were my words; you—you know you adore frankness, I surely was not too plain?"

"You were not plain," he said, "but positively ugly. I did not know beauty could so transform itself. I——"

"My dear friends," and Countess Isaure put her head through the library door, "why do you not come? Coffee is waiting, and almost cold. Besides, I have other photographs to show you."

"We are coming, dear," said Miss Leslie, and they went immediately to the library.

Count Léon was showing Brandon some bric-à-

brac, some letters of the little Prince Imperial (he was an ardent Bonapartist), and some magnificently carved frames which held fine portraits of the Imperial family. The library, like every other room in the house, was homelike and charming. A portrait of the Count attracted much attention. Mademoiselle Leslie asked who made it, and Lord Beaufort answered; "I know from looking at it that it was done by the Count André, Léon's father, who is one of the most remarkable portraitists of the day."

Then ensued a discussion on artists and the difference in the various painters at that time celebrated in Paris."

In an old-fashioned street in the Quartier Parc Monceau, stands a superb private house, surrounded by a garden, rare to find in the heart of a great city. A high wall encloses the grounds, and in the centre a magnificent arch, with a coronet cut in stone, indicates the dwelling of persons of distinction. The house is a grand model of Italian renaissance architecture, the massive squares of stone forming a structure of simple yet solid beauty. Tall trees are in the garden, and in summer time the hedges and walks are rich with flowering vines and verdure. Ivy grows about the ancient boughs, birds build their nests and sing all day in the summer sunshine. The sound of falling water is heard from the Gothic fountain, and strange faces laugh at the leaping waters from out masks of maid or monster. At the end is another *alloggia*, which is the studio. Within courtiers in broidered, bejewelled robes of state, smile down from the canvas. Those who rejoiced

in the world and its good things, live in life-like attitudes when their eyes have been closed by the great narcotic, Death. The frame that holds the pictures closes, and in the panels are heaped piles of goodly things. Luscious grapes, ripe oranges, the fruit of the kitchen garden, and the more substantial viands, lie heavily on a groaning table. We understand the portrait's well-being and his regret at leaving that which he loved best in life. A curious picture is a Hollander who married four wives. He forms the centre of the group, and in the four corners are the chosen ones. The last, who outlived him, has her beautiful eyes dimmed with tears. They are so real that the canvas is wet. Leaving the treasures of the studio, one visits the house. Here in one room are some rare Japanese vases bought at Milan, part of the wonderful set whose fame is world-wide. They are marvellous, magnificent, and Count André, who is, besides being a wonderful painter, one of the greatest collectioners of the day, knew how to appreciate them. The *salle-à-manger* contains the greatest number of Franz Hals owned by any private individual. They look at one from their stately panels with most inquisitive and life-like eyes. Some have hats, some are without; some have ruffs, and others are a mass of dark color against a still more sombre background. Oh, the wondrous art of painting! Oh, this living with the dead who are yet alive; this being in a peopled room where everything demised stirs with life as much as does one's self!

Fancy what a time they have when the world sleeps and their counterfeit, man, has drained the last

health at the feast? I can imagine how they stir in their frames, how one nods to the other, how they talk over the events of the day, and how finally they all descend from their panels living, breathing creatures, and together join in the measured minuet. The table is spread anew. Hebe fills each glass with her incomparable nectar, flowers bloom in the faded tapestry, children gambol on the velvet sward, and the revel begins. Stately dames and gartered knights hold courtly converse; youths tell to maidens the old story; heads silvered by time nod to other heads whose ebon hue already borrows the snow from the mountain of eternity. The banquetting hall is filled with these revived creatures of the past, and the night wears on. No mystic hand appears on the disembowelled wall, no Mede or Persian comes with retributive fires to blast so much happiness. The knights and dames dance their last dance. The jewels of their stomachers fade into a dim light. The bright eyes wear the shimmer of a distant lake, the stiff ruffs soften down to their old softness, the astral burns a quenched fire, there is a hurrying scurrying sound, and into each panel slips the hero of many a midnight revel. Morning comes and sees them all smiling down from the canvas. The immobile mouths tell no tale of the night, the hypocritical eyes look one in the face with the most innocent of regards, the classical heads are immovable upon their shoulders, and all knowledge of the past night's revelry is politely ignored.

And this in the house of Count and Countess André, one of the most remarkable of modern times.

Lord Beaufort, who had often visited them, told Miss Leslie of their charming home. Count Léon tried in vain to check the Earl's enthusiasm, but it finished by Mademoiselle earnestly requesting Isaure to take her to the house. She promised, of course, although modestly disclaiming that it differed vastly from any other. They had their coffee, the gentlemen smoked while the Countess withdrew a moment in answer to a call. Brandon went deep into an examination of some very ancient arms that Count Vandalin had; there were many swords of marvellous *lames*, and hilts whose jewels would not have shamed a fine lady's eyes. There were complete sets of armor, masks, and the usual paraphernalia of poignards, sabres, stilettos, pistols, etc., etc. The Count was reasonably proud of his collection, and principally as they were all weapons that had been handed down from father to son for centuries, and bore the stains of real antiquity.

While they were away looking at them, Beaufort and Miss Leslie found themselves alone. He spoke:

"Why did you not see me the other day when I called? You were at home."

"Yes," she said, hesitatingly, "but—but I was particularly engaged."

He bit his lip. "And if I call again, would I be more fortunate?"

"That depends," she said, "upon *when* you call."

"May I come to-morrow?"

"No."

"May I come to-morrow—evening?"

"No," she said again.

"May I come the next day?"

She thought and answered, "No."

He looks at her with the most unmoved calm, and said:

"May I come the next day?"

"You are so persistent," she said, with a laugh, "I suppose that I must say yes, and I will make a positive engagement for Monday. You must come to tea, and fetch Mr. Brandon. Do you know," looking at him suddenly, "that I like your cousin very much?"

"Yes," he responded, carelessly, "he's not at all a bad sort. I am glad you like him, but," with half-awakened jealousy, "I hope you do not prefer him to me?"

"What would you think were I to say yes?" she answered, without looking up.

"I should say," he replied, with ill-concealed emotion, "that—that it cannot be possible. You are jesting. You are saying this to try me."

"What is there impossible in one's preferring your kinsman to you?" she demanded, calmly.

He seemed ashamed of his outbreak, and answered, humbly:

"You are right. There is nothing impossible in it; on the contrary, any one must prefer him. Dear, serious old Athol; but I don't mind what any one thinks but you. In fact, the whole world might worship him for aught I care; but I could not endure your preferring him to me. I hope, I do hope," anxiously, "that you don't speak in earnest."

She hesitated, but answered:

"I—I am not quite sure."

"This is ridiculous!" he said, angrily; "but you must be jesting. I refuse to believe what you say. In fact, I refuse to give credence to anything. You said some dreadful things an hour ago about women, but I know you don't believe them yourself. Why do you wish to try me? Why do you wish to place yourself in a false light in my eyes? Why——"

She looked up haughtily.

"I presume, my lord, that I am at liberty to say, do, and like what and whom I choose. I may jest at times, but I certainly mean and have meant all that I have said to-day."

"Then," he said, rising, "you prefer any one to me?"

"I did not say so."

"Well, you acknowledge that you said you preferred my cousin?"

"I," as she raised her eyes, "I acknowledge that I said nothing of the sort. I remember that I did say that I was not sure."

He brightened.

"Forgive me," he pleaded. "I am an idiot, but I feared you might be telling the truth."

She tried to open her lips, he stopped her: "No, say nothing! give me the benefit of the doubt. I may fear anything, but until I know to the contrary I may hope—that you like me at least as well as another."

Brandon came into the room, followed by the Count. "I should think one would have to use uncommon caution," he said, still talking of the arms.

"I should not care to scratch myself with that vicious little tooth-pick."

"Rather not," said the Count, following at his heels. "There's enough poison in the blade to dispose of a whole family."

Madame Vandalin came into the room. "*Mille pardons!*" she said, "but my dressmaker had just sent me a second corsage to my lemon brocade. I had to try it on. You know one is really at the mercy of Paris *couturiers*, and one has to try a thing when one can get it. Then, too, I am *pressée* for this dress. I wish——"

"She wants," said the Count, with delightful candor, "to sit for her photograph to-morrow, if the day be but favorable. Am I not right, dear wife?"

"How can you be so silly?" she answered. "Why did you not let me explain myself? I really want it for some imperials that you have been at me six months to get taken; but if you are going to laugh so about it, why, I shall refuse to sit." He apologized. He begged her to reconsider.

"To show you that I am only jesting, I shall pose with you myself."

This restored harmony. I had forgotten to mention that the Count had an equal fondness with his wife for the camera's productions, and there were at least ten excellent likenesses of himself on different tables and *étagères* about the room.

It was still raining, but Mademoiselle's carriage was waiting. She embraced her dearest Isaure most tenderly, and said adieu to the Prince de la Mollasse, who frankly dubbed her "My Flirt." As she

reached the outer door, the Countess called her back.

"When shall I see you?" she asked.

"*Bientôt*," Mademoiselle responded.

"I will come a moment on Monday," said Isaure, "and *à propos*, do not forget to give me the new photograph of yourself that was promised last week."

Miss Leslie was quite out of the door when Isaure's pretty dark head peeped over the bannisters. "Don't forget, dear," with an earnest voice, "that I want a *décolletée* posture, also one where I can see the eyes. *A bientôt sans adieu.*"

CHAPTER XIX.

TEA WITH MRS. ADRIAN.

"So pleased to see you," said Ethel, holding out her hand, "and Mr. Brandon, too. I feared, my lord, that you had forgotten my invitation. You are late, and very fashionable, and have just missed the great American artist, Mr. Healy, and his charming daughter."

Beaufort was charmed to be obliged to apologize. It showed that she had thought of him, if she noticed that he was late.

"We have been to the Grand Hotel," he said, "to see a billiard match between two capital players. I knew time was flying, but could not tear Mr. Brandon away. He is very ungallant."

"No, indeed," interrupted Brandon, "not at all. I was merely so absorbed in the game that I could not realize how late it really was. I now ask Mademoiselle's pardon. Surely we are in the way. Let us say a little 'how do you do,' and leave at once."

"I cannot admit the possibility of such a thing," she said, gaily. "You take me at my word too quickly. It is not late to come; it is just the hour, in fact. I am expecting some other friends, also.

It seemed late, not because I expected you, but because I was hoping that you would come earlier."

Brandon bowed. What a flirt this woman was! Or had she been addressing her words to the Earl? Beaufort took them to himself, at any rate, for his face showed the greatest surprise and pleasure. He went up to her quickly, while Brandon turned to meet Mrs. Adrian, who was coming forward from the boudoir.

The Earl spoke. "Do you really mean that you were waiting for me? Are you glad that I have come? It seems a year since our breakfast at the Count's, a whole year. I have been thinking about you ever since, and yesterday I thought that I saw you."

She started and looked him in the face anxiously. "You thought you saw me?" she stammered. "When, at what hour, and—and where?"

He saw the mistake he had made, but answered with perfect nonchalance, wishing to reassure her without seeming to have noticed her emotion: "I saw you," he replied, "going in the direction of the Bois. You were very swell driving with your aunt. You were lying back in the carriage without apparently seeing anything or anybody. It was about three o'clock. I tried hard to make you notice me, and half feared that you intended the cut direct. Was it so?"

She was so much relieved at what he had told her that her face unconsciously assumed a friendly expression. She answered him with warmth. "How would it be possible for me to cut you when——"

"When what?" he interrupted.

"When I had met you at a friend's house," she replied, guardedly.

"Is that what you were going to say at first?" he asked, persistently.

"No, it is not exactly what I started out to remark."

"May I beg you," he continued, earnestly, "to say exactly what you at first intended?"

"Do you insist?" nervously.

"I insist."

"Then, if you insist, I suppose I must say it, although it is not worth making such a fuss about. I was going to say, 'how could I cut you when—when I like you?' There! it's out now; are you satisfied?"

He gave her an eloquent look of thanks. Then he spoke: "Could I believe what you say, I would be a happy man. Is it, can it be true?"

She looked surprised, but answered: "Yes, it is true. Why should one not like you? You are amiable" (he bowed), "good looking" (he bowed again), "and—and you are an earl." He interrupted, ironically:

"'An earl!' oh, yes! Then I am to be liked for my title. Thanks! thanks awfully, for reminding me that I have some claim to being noticed by an American!"

"American! ha! ha!" She laughed an exasperating little cadence. "Not only Americans, but every nation adores titles. Is it possible you can treat lightly so great a blessing? Think, only think,

how much nicer it makes you in some people's eyes. Think of how all the world runs after a 'my lord!'"

"This is folly," he said. "Can you not be serious a moment?"

"Serious? Pray, and am I not serious? Why should I be different from all others? What the whole world does is unquestionably right. I am not here to reform society."

"I do not believe," he said, looking at her steadily, that you care what any one does in the world, or that you care for what the world calls society. I believe you are different from any other woman, and that you would like any one just as well whether he had a title or not. Will you be serious, and answer me this one question?"

"I *am* so! Yes, you are right. It would never make any difference to me whether the person I loved had a title or not, as I believe in greater nobility than that of the accident of birth."

He looked at her admiringly, and said:

"The sentiment does you honor, if it be sincere."

"I am sincere, my lord, in all things, believe me."

"In all?"

"In all."

"Well, if you be so sincere, confess that you know the deep impression you have made upon me."

She hesitated, but looking at him with frank eyes, responded:

"In truth, you go too far. I do not *know* that I have made an impression upon you, and the subject has been far from my thoughts."

"Do you believe it, or not? Would you mind speaking the truth? I came——"

"You came to tea. Will you have some?"

"Yes, when you have answered me. Do you believe it, or not?"

"To please you, yes. I believe that I have made some impression on you. Most women would; why not I? Besides, I am thirsty. I am dying for some tea. Come!"

"I do not care for it," he said, bluntly, "I care for but one thing in this world! Do you know" (desperately) "that I have fallen in love with you?"

She looked up, affrightedly. "Pray, my lord, do not say so. How is it possible? You know me so little!"

"So little," he echoed, bitterly; "I do not know you at all, but I cannot help telling you that——"

"I must not listen," she said, with dignity; "you take me by surprise, and I do not believe what you say. Englishmen are great flirts, and American women usually understand the art in no small degree of perfection. I take it for granted that you are flirting; but I must request you to spare me if I do not reciprocate. Let us be friends if you will, but do not waste any sentiment upon me. I—I am not worthy of it. I do not care for it. My mind is filled with many things; one of them is *not* love."

"Why," said he, looking her straight in the face, "do you say you are not worthy?"

"Why do I say I am not worthy?" she echoed, in amazement. "Why, I said it because—because I forgot myself. On the contrary, I do not know of

any gentleman who is worth my little finger." Desperately, "Do not let us quarrel. Shall we have some tea?"

"You are a clever woman," he said, slowly. "As cruel as beautiful, and as strange as cruel." Abruptly, "Do you dislike me?"

She held out her hand to him unconsciously. "No, no," she murmured, "far from it."

"Then," he said, "you like me. Do you like me a little?" She colored, and murmured softly, "Yes, perhaps."

Her words brought him to himself. What was he doing? What saying? He knew nothing, and cared less. He only realized how madly he loved her. He was on the point of declaring this when she spoke calmly, coolly.

"But I like you quite enough to take you on trial as a friend. I am very capricious, however, and may change my mind at any moment. Does such an idea please you?"

"Yes," he said, quickly, "I am content with whatever you fancy. Do with me what you will."

Mrs. Adrian came toward them.

"It is disgraceful," she said to Ethel, "your keeping Lord Beaufort so long without tea. Come to the boudoir, it is much more cheerful than here. Mr. Brandon is already there, and we are waiting."

Beaufort went with her to the room where he had first seen Miss Leslie. There was the little table, or writing-desk in a corner, some dainty flowers bloomed in a vase on the *étagère*, the rich furniture was unchanged, and the tapestry that made a curtain to the

door, fell in graceful folds when they had passed through it. His heart stood still. How vividly he recalled everything that had passed that eventful thirty-first of October! even the slightest thing that had occurred since was as indelibly stamped upon his memory.

Ethel saw a paper on her desk and hastily went up to it. She seated herself a moment instinctively, and when she did so, the Earl realized all that was between them. He went toward her quickly.

"Do not sit there," he said.

"Why?" she asked, with simplicity.

"Because—because," he stammered, "it makes you too far away from me." She little dreamed the real intent of his words.

"How capricious you are," she said, pleasantly. "I only went to see if there was an unopened letter, but I see there is none. Let us draw near the tea-table. I think I am an angel of good temper to go without so long, and all to please you."

Mrs. Adrian had the little cups all ready. Athol Brandon came forward to hand one to Miss Leslie. She took it, and remarked that she was quite English in her liking for tea.

"It is an agreeable hour of our lives," she said, "when five o'clock comes, or after dinner, when aunt and I sit alone in the library. We drink quarts of our favorite beverage. I build castles in the air, and when it is finished, I look in the cup to tell my fortune."

The Earl swallowed his in gulps. "Here," said he, distractedly, "look in mine and tell me what

you see there?" He handed her the empty cup. Mrs. Adrian laughed and Brandon was all interest. "I see," said Miss Leslie, "disappointment, a long road, wealth and bitterness, and in the end——"

"What in the end?" he asked, eagerly.

"In the end," she repeated, "after a long time, comes the dearest wish of your heart, with triumph complete." He looked delighted, then asked, dubiously: "Will it be very long?"

"Very long," she answered, "very long, and you cross deep water; but keep good courage, your final days are filled with joy, and everything is charming; only do not lose patience."

Brandon said: "How can he thank you enough for so lively a fortune? You speak with such conviction, that one might think you a prophet. I shall not trouble you to tell mine, as I am not a believer in that sort of thing."

She laughed: "You might have spared refusing before I offered to tell it; I could not have predicted anything to an unbeliever. In most things that one hopes will come to pass, faith is the first requisite to insure success. Of course, if Lord Beaufort does not believe implicitly all that I have told him, why, according to the orthodox soothsayer, it will never come to pass."

"I believe in you," he said, lightly, "and in everything that you say. The thing that distresses me, however, is waiting so long for my final triumph, and—and the realization of the dearest wish of my heart. Look again, please; can one not hurry one's fate?"

She shook her head wisely and replied: "I dare not look again. One can hurry one's fate, but it brings needless misfortune. I am a fatalist, and believe 'what is to be will be.' Be content with your fortune. It is brighter than mine."

At that moment visitors were announced. Mr. and Mrs. Squires came in, with Dr. and Mrs. Carlisle, and before they were fairly seated, Countess Vandalin made her appearance. She brought sunshine with her, as usual. Her lovely dark eyes glanced around and fell upon Beaufort and Brandon with a questioning look. "And Léon," she said, "have you seen him?"

"Yes," said the Earl, "he dropped into the Grand Hotel just as we left. I suppose the brilliant match was the attraction. Is he coming here to-day?" Just then the bell rang.

"Talk of an angel," said Mrs. Adrian, "and it appears!"

Count Vandalin came forward. He greeted the ladies with his usual heartiness, but turned to Miss Leslie with these words, "Good-day, my dear flirt! I have come on purpose to say a *petit bonjour*, and drink some tea." Then he saluted Beaufort and Brandon, and was presented by Miss Leslie to her dear friends the Doctor and wife and the Squires.

Tea was served directly. Some fruit cake that had been made in America took the place of the airy nothings called *plaisirs*, *désirs*, and *gâteau soufflé* that accompanies tea in Paris.

"*A propos*," said the Count, "how are you all since last we met? What a terrible day last Friday was! and—and, please give me some more cake."

"Léon," said the Countess, "you will die of indigestion!"

"What an ignoble death!" he said. "*Never! never!* but I will have some cake just the same." The cake was passed, Beaufort laughed and joined the Count. "It reminds me of England," he said. "We shall none of us dine to-night, but one may as well anticipate dinner when there is such an excuse."

Mr. Squires was the only reasonable one. "The only thing I ever anticipate is pleasure when I go to the theatre to hear great artists, or when I come to see Miss Leslie."

"I have something to propose for Wednesday," said Mrs. Adrian. "Let us all breakfast in the country, and go after to visit some neighboring château."

"Capital!" said Beaufort, and the Countess agreed that it was the very thing.

"Let us go to see Ferrières," said Brandon, "I have heard so much of it."

It was decided to go there. The party was made up for Wednesday, only the doctor and his wife, having a previous engagement, could not come.

"I must go now," said the Countess. "We have two soirées for to-night, and a dinner. What a busy life." She sighed, but with pleasure.

The Earl could not go without a last word. "May I come on Friday to see you, in the evening?"

"Oh, no," quickly, "we go to the Opera to hear Les Huguenots; but you may come and see me there."

"May I sit in your box all of the time? I adore

that opera. I—I should like to be near you to—to talk it over with you." How he was stammering.

She laughed. "You adore that opera; you want to talk it over with me; you want to sit the whole evening in my box. What am I to say? *Quelle*——"

"Say 'yes,'" he pleaded, "yes to everything I ask——"

"*Au revoir*," gaily, extending her pretty hand to be kissed. "We meet on Wednesday; in the meantime, I—will think it over."

CHAPTER XX.

BREAKFAST AT LAGNY.

"And so," said Mrs. Adrian, "we are going to see the famous château? Of course we will have a fine time, although it is late in the season to expect to see grass growing by the hedges. I do hope the gardens are not quite dismantled of all their summer loveliness. I dote upon gardens, and upon gardens that are quite green."

"The only green thing at Ferrières is the garden, depend upon it," said Blakeman; "but the out-door look is nothing, the château itself is so beautiful."

They were a very comfortable party; the weather was fine, and a special *compartiment* of the *ligne du Nord* was taking them out of Paris. There were Mrs. Adrian and Miss Leslie, Madame Hortensia, an *old* new friend, the Countess, and Mrs. Squires. Then, of gentlemen, the party was most prolific. There were Lord Beaufort and Brandon, Mr. Gratiot and Mr. Blakeman, Mr. Squires and Count Vandalin, with Mr. Costanza, an *old* friend, who completed the party.

"Where are we now?" said Mrs. Adrian.

"This, Madame," said the Count, leaning out of the window, "is a small station called Creil."

"Is it important?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered.

"In what way?"

"It is *near* Paris. Jove, I thank thee!"

"Don't mention it," said Mrs. Adrian, and silence followed.

"I am inquisitive," said Miss Leslie; "who can tell me all about Ferrières? I am most anxious to learn something."

"I am happy, Mademoiselle," said Mr. Blakeman, "to be able to tell you much of the place. Will you hear it now, or later?"

"Now," said Miss Leslie; and "now," "now," was repeated by everybody.

He began: Château Ferrières was bought from the heirs of the Duc d'Otrante, and was remodelled by Baron James de Rothschild many years ago. It is about two hours from Paris, and after we reach *Lagny-sur-Marne*——"

"What's that?" interrupted Mrs. Squires.

"A small village, madame," interposed the speaker. "Lagny is the village, and Marne is the muddy, but very useful river upon which it is located. But to proceed. The château——"

"Whom does it belong to now?" asked Ethel.

"To the Rothschilds," Mr. Gratiot answered.

"I do not know," said the artist, with dignity, "but *who* is telling this story I commenced?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Adrian, "but don't tell anything about it; don't say another word. Let each one find out for himself. Where do we breakfast?"

"At Lagny," said Mr. Squires, promptly. "I have an *araire*, should you wish to see it."

"Thanks," responded Mrs. Adrian. "The only good I ever found them was to light the fire with when the darkies had had too much camp-meeting. Tracts, almanacs, and railway time-tables are best out of print. When do we get to Lagny?" she reiterated.

"In ten minutes," said the Count; "it is a charming place."

"I will get a photograph of it," said the Countess.

"Let us hope," said Ethel, "that when you will see it in after life you will know what it represents. My friend, Katie P——, after travelling all over Italy, Germany, and Austria, said she would show me the souvenir pictures that she had bought of each place that she liked. In looking over the collection, I remarked a lovely interior, with a view of gardens in the back. It was familiar, and yet not familiar. Where had I seen it? Katie looked at the picture and smiled triumphantly. 'Beautiful, isn't it?' she said. It particularly struck my eye. 'What house, and where is it?' I asked. 'Oh,' glibly, 'I'll tell you directly. This—ahem,' a long look. 'This is, ah, ahem!' another, a longer look. 'Of course, I am coming to it directly, but the name, those barbarous Italian names.' 'It is in Italy?' I hazard. 'I should think so,' she answers, scornfully, 'but this place,—it doesn't slip my mind, but——' A joyous thought takes possession of her. She looks at the bottom of the photograph, she looks at its face; she looks at it reversed. Again she scans it, and an angry light begins to glow in her eyes. She turns the picture. Oh, horror! Her feelings could no longer be con-

trolled. 'There,' said she, 'look how I have been swindled. These are all souvenirs, and that fool of a photographer has forgotten to write the name of the place on the back of the picture.'"

Everybody roared.

"I am afraid," said Blakeman, "that no one would forget Lagny who had once seen it."

"No," she interrupted, "had they really *seen* it; but my young lady acquaintance had *not* seen any of the places she had bought the photographs of. Like most Americans making a summer trip, each time the train stopped for coal or to take on water, she bought a collection of the chief objects of interest in the town, and declared that each photograph was a personal souvenir. I once knew a lady that returned to Paris after a trip. When asked if she had seen Rome, she blushed, but answered courageously, 'I might have seen it, but *we passed it in the night*. I have since regretted our precipitation, but I distinctly remember *one* of the seven hills.'"

"Hills!" said the count, "what Hills are they? I knew a family——"

"Fie, Count," said Miss Leslie; "you know I am only telling you what somebody said about having seen Rome."

"Not to interrupt," said Mrs. Adrian, "but is this Lagny?" They were approaching a village, as the whistle that moment announced. Sure enough, it was Lagny. They descended and made their way from the station to a quaint little restaurant embowered in trees, and adjoining the banks of the river. There was some parley about its being good enough

to furnish them much of a breakfast, but all decided upon trusting to luck.

The proprietor himself came forward with a smiling face, and the weighty question of what could be given them to eat was soon broached. Mr. Squires was spokesman.

He commenced. "I remember when I was in Australia——"

"What," said his wife, "has that got to do with the subject?"

"Well," he answered, "let me continue. When I was in Australia, I saw just such a river as this——"

The proprietor of the inn here interfered. "Monsieur must be jesting. In all the world, there is only one Marne. This river is celebrated for its fish. There are——"

"That's just what I was getting at: that in a river like the one I saw in—well, in a river like this, that one must be able to get delicious trout. We will have some for the first course. How does that suit?" making a general appeal to the company.

"Excellent! capital!" they all said; then the proprietor spoke again.

"Fish? fish?" with a grin.

"Yes, fish," said the gentleman; "what is the matter?"

"Nothing," said the man, coolly, "except that we never have any fresh fish at Lagny. They are all sold to the city, and the nearest we can come to it would be some salted herrings that we import from England."

Mr. Squires groaned. "Do you mean to say," he

added, indignantly, "that one can never get fresh fish with a river like this in the town?"

The man simply nodded. He had told the truth.

Some chickens were sporting under the trees in the kitchen garden. Mr. Squires breathed more freely, and said: "I suppose we must resign ourselves to do without fish, but we will have some new-laid eggs, and after, some broiled chicken."

The proprietor bowed grimly, and said: "There are no fresh eggs; they were all sold this morning; and the last chicken was sent to *Monsieur le curé.* He is ill."

"In Heaven's name!" said Mr. Squires, "what have you got to eat? A fine river, and no fish; coops of hens, and no eggs; chickens, but none to cook! How does one live in this town, anyway?"

The man put on some dignity: "Monsieur forgets," he said, icily, "that we live here by *selling* the products of the village, not eating them. The daily commerce may not be interfered with by strangers. One can get things fresh at early morning, and late at night, but *never* in the middle of the day. The best is sold, and one eats the rest."

A vague light began to dawn upon the company. Who was this man, who seemed the proprietor, yet who spoke with the language of a magistrate, or a village beadle? To whom had they been talking? Was there some mistake? Mr. Squires continued:

"Do you know——"

"Monsieur must excuse me," said the man, "I do not know; I am a stranger here myself. Perhaps—perhaps—" politely, "Monsieur had better see the *chef.*"

Mr. Squires turned pale. Who, who, in God's name, was this man? The Count stepped forward, scarcely able to keep his countenance, and managed to say:

"Monsieur is not the keeper of the inn?"

"Yes," the man answered, with a surprised look.

"And you know nothing about what you have to eat—you say you are a stranger here?"

"Pardon me," said the man, with dignity. "'Tis true I am the proprietor; I bought this restaurant yesterday. It is also true that I am a stranger here; I only arrived this morning. I—in fact, Monsieur may not have noticed, but I came in the same train with him from Paris. I can speak with certainty about the place, as I know the habits of the town and the river. There is no river like the Marne. Where would one find such a river?" with increased dignity.

"It would be hard," said the Count, "to find a river anywhere that had no fish, to find hens who lay no fresh eggs, and chickens fit only to pick in the grass. However, thanks for your information; but can we see any one who could get us some breakfast?"

The proprietor touched a bell. A slender Alsacian made his appearance.

"Breakfast," said the new inn-keeper, with dignity, "Breakfast for everybody in—*à propos*, would Monsieur like to sit out under the trees, or would he prefer the *salle-à-manger?*"

"In the garden, by all means," said the ladies, and they passed through the quaint little house to

the back, where some fine trees wore still their summer dress of green. There were gravelled walks, with grape-vines clinging to trellises. There was a hedge and many late flowers blooming beside it. Round tables were under the trees, and the largest arbor was selected for the party.

The day was fine and soft, and the sun poured down as it sometimes does in autumn weather. The muddy Marne glided by to the left, and the murmur of the waters was soothing as it reached the ear. All seemed perfect and harmonious, when a terrible discovery was made. The ground was damp, too damp to keep one's feet upon; but rugs were provided, footstools were furnished, and the ladies decided to try sitting out of doors, at least for a time.

What a breakfast it was, to be sure! Nothing was perfect, but every one was in good humor. Mr. Squires had scarcely recovered his equilibrium over his peculiar *début*. All agreed to accept whatever was offered with a good grace, and the new proprietor's health was drank in solid bumpers of pure red wine. There was some of that to be had at least.

An omelette with herbs was the first thing served; then some radishes that had made the centre bouquet in yesterday's market-place were introduced, with some olives and an anchovy salad, which was very salty, though palatable, for our travellers were hungry and did not mind so trifling a thing as too salt anchovies and radishes whose color had fled.

Then there was a tough *bifsteak*, some fried potatoes that looked as if blown up, and were really filled with wind; then came dessert—cheese that could

not keep—to itself, and some fruit that had untimely fled the parent bough during the first hurricane that had swept through the village in early summer.

The coffee was a success; a little pale, perhaps, but it had a clear conscience and no chiccory.

"Mine," said the Count, "is so weak that I must set it on the table." Then there was a general laugh. Thus chatting gaily, the *déjeuner* was seasoned with the most savory of all appetizers, good temper and cheerfulness.

When the bill was being settled, the virginal proprietor came forward and saluted his first guests.

"Let me," said he, "offer you, as a souvenir of Lagny-sur-Marne, a photograph of my restaurant, *l'Ange Gardien.*"

Countess Vandalin stepped forward: "Adieu, monsieur," she said, with her sweet voice. "I accept it with pleasure!" Then wishing him prosperity, they took their leave.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE VISIT TO FERRIÈRES.

CARRIAGES were in waiting to take them to Ferrières, and the Earl managed to sit with Miss Leslie and her aunt. After an hour's drive along a charming route they reached the Château.

It was bought from the heirs of the Duke d'Otrante, and remodelled by Baron James de Rothschild. Ferrières is a most magnificent property, and even the restoring of it by the Baron has not been able to entirely disguise its original beauty. The park and gardens remain in all their old loveliness, and the great trees form a perfect forest of green. The house is restored and modernized, but its shape remains as when first built. The grounds are laid out with rare taste, and many trees have the branches cut and covered with the flowering sweetbriar rose.

The effect is beautiful. It seems as if freshly culled gigantic bouquets were daily placed in the garden. Statues gleam from behind and through the great oaks, and sounds of falling water mark the locality of fountains, where nymphs and golden fishes sport in the marble basins.

When they reached the great entrance door, it was opened by a pompous footman. He was so magnificent that one's voice died to a whisper when trying to address him. A special invitation to visit the Château ought to command some respect, and, in truth, the lordly personage felt that his visitors were not to be despised, although he could not come down from his grand pedestal all at once.

The inmates not being at home, the whole house could be seen, and it really merited a visit. The party went in after the fashion of sightseers.

"This will never do," said Mr. Gratiot. "We are quite like the Cook tourists. Let us disperse."

One looked at one thing, and another at another; but, in spite of not wishing to do the Château in real voyage-fashion, they finished by all fetching up together and following the imposing footman, who acted as guide.

The rarest things at Ferrières are the great paintings on leather by Cordova; a room has been made expressly for them, which is called "*le salon des cuirs.*" Baron James found them in Spain, and bought them for a mere song—eight thousand francs. He had them restored at a cost of one hundred thousand, and, to-day, would not sell them for a million—which affords a good idea of the modest per cent. that falls imperceptibly into the coffers of the great financiers.

The footman preceded the party, and droned out a guide-book explanation of the various objects. After examining the Cordova's with undisguised admiration, they turned into a long room with a gal-

lery running around it at the top. Various objects, scattered about on convenient tables, were commented upon by the party. The man always smiled frigidly, and explained: "Yes, madame, or monsieur is quite right. It is rich, but *extremely simple.* The Rothschilds do not need to make a display of their wealth."

He had said this when they looked at the paintings on leather, he repeated it each time that the eye fell upon any object in the room; and in fact, one began unconsciously to wait for this remark.

In this room were some fine paintings. Henriette, of England, by Joshua Reynolds, a superb Velasquez, a Rubens, two Bordones, a Rembrandt, Van Moll, a Tiziano, and others too numerous to mention. There was Henriette's writing-desk with *fleurs de lys* carved on the wings, and with a flat top. There was a marvellous cabinet made in Rome in the tenth century, with incrusted ivory and inlaid woods. On a centre-table, beside some albums, was Madame de Pompadour's mirror.

It was in a gilded bronze frame, incrusted with entire shells of mother-of-pearl. The Earl came nearer to look at it, and Mademoiselle Leslie also went closer and turned to peep at herself in the famous glass. Beaufort looked as she gazed.

"This mirror," said he, "is the only one I ever saw worthy to reflect your image. Do you not find yourself more beautiful in it than in any other?"

"I was thinking," she said, quickly, "not of myself, but wondering how many faces had been reflected in it. Could it only talk, how strange the

history it would relate ; and yet how fortunate that these emblems of the past are not speaking ones in a certain sense. Narrations of sorrow might oftener be related than tales of joy, and certainly Madame de Pompadour's mirror must have looked out on a varied life. I—I am afraid I should not care to have it in the room with me. It might start up and talk."

"How odd are your fancies, and what a chameleon-like nature you have! Do you know that I have never seen you twice the same?"

She laughed. "Why should a nature not be changeable? It is very monotonous being always in the same mood, and, confess: Do you not prefer a character capable of transforming itself? To-day, gay ; to-morrow, sad ; the next day neither one nor the other?"

"Why do you not ask me plainly if I do not prefer you, in all your moods and tenses? It would be franker than foisting an imaginary person's character on me, and pretending that it is not your own. I answer blindly—no, advisedly: I prefer you, and all that appertains to you."

"All?" she said, gaily.

He started, and looked into her fair face. Did he like all that pertained to her? Unquestionably not, but he had spoken too hastily. He looked into her eyes with fervor—a look that said "yes" to her question ; but, like many seemingly honest glances, combined a little truth and much deception. However, so long as she did not know, it was all right.

"When we have done the Château," he said, "I have something to tell you. May I?"

"Yes," she answered, "if it is something very nice. I——"

"Ethel!" her aunt's voice broke in, "we must all keep together now, as things are to be generally explained, and you know how interesting this house is."

The footman led the way to the state dining-room, to a Louis Seize salon, then into a smaller apartment, where he stopped. His eyes watered, his gait was unsteady, and one immediately was led to expect something out of the usual description of the house.

"This room," said he, "is the one Jules Favre came to weep in. He sat on that sofa—there" (all looked at the sofa), "and buried his head in his hands. He had frequent interviews here with M. de Bismarck. *A propos*, of him I cannot speak with much respect, "*c'est un*——"

"Do not distress yourself," said Miss Leslie, kindly, "but speak your mind. We are none of us Germans."

The man's face brightened, and he explained:

"The word I would have used, one cannot mention in France before ladies, but you call it——"

"Pig, in English, I suppose," ejaculated Mr. Squires, very gravely.

"Yes," he said, very much relieved, "but still the name doesn't sound quite right."

"I am constrained," said the Count, "if this august company will excuse me, to pronounce the real word, Hog. Ah! hog the same, but allowable only in English."

All acquiesced, and a genuine smile broke over the footman's face.

"Yes," he said, delightedly, "that sounds right now." Then he continued :

"Since the Baron James de Rothschild's death, his rooms have always been closed. When the Prussians came to Paris, they took possession of Ferrières. Mr. de Bismarck inspected all of the rooms and selected one for himself. We explained that Baron James's apartment was closed, and asked him to respect it. He said ; 'I will see it first.' Of course, his chambers were the richest. As soon as Bismarck cast his eye upon them, he cried out with joy : 'What, leave the best rooms in the house unoccupied ? Never—*me voilà*. Here is where I shall install myself.' And would you believe it ?" continued the man, with awful solemnity ; "the wretched German took possession that moment, and slept like a hog every night in the bed where the poor dear master died. This rich counterpane that you see was once stolen by the Prussians, and found days after in the woods, miles from the house, torn and ruined as one sees."

Some epithets not altogether complimentary to Bismarck, this prince of successful court buffoons, then followed. The footman seemed delighted, and began showing some of the rare objects that adorned the chamber. Some Russian ware of great value was on a table. He tapped a vase with a significant smile.

"Who would think," said he, "to find objects of such worth hidden in a bed-chamber ? This," touch-

ing one, "is worth a hundred thousand francs. It would be unnoticed, did I not point it out; but," with a shrug of the shoulders, "the Rothschilds never make a show of their money."

The man was getting more lordly. He grew confidential and continued:

"Being in this room reminds me of our late master. He was so witty! A friend of Madame la Baronne once tried to tell him that his son, Mr. Gustave, was ruining himself. He said: 'Baron, he is fast, he runs in debt, he is too extravagant!' The baron replied sharply: 'M. Gustave is no fool, he knows he can spend what he likes, for he has a rich father to pay his debts; but I cannot, alas!' sobbing, 'I am an orphan!'"

All laughed at the gentleman's wit. "I could relate," said the footman, "dozens of similar things, but forbear."

They passed into a smoking-room, *fumoir*, restored and decorated by Eugène Lami. The painter was there at that moment, and was showing some friends the room. He was a small, white-headed man, French in precision, with a sort of half-ceremonious air, not at all unbecoming to a great artist.

The *fumoir* is shaped like a horseshoe, and in each panel running around, is painted a scene from the carnival of Venice. The work is life-like, and beautiful in sentiment and color. To Mr. Lami is due the restoration of the entire château. Near the *fumoir* are some handsome rooms, and in each and every one the rarest *objets d'art* met the eye at every turn. There are sixty of these

rooms in the house. Imagine the enormous wealth represented!

They ascended to the second story. Everything was spotlessly clean, and Mrs. Adrian inquired how many servants it took to keep the rooms in such order. The footman swelled with importance.

"We are two, madame," he answered, modestly.

"Two for each room," hazarded she.

"No, madame," he answered, sharply; "M. le Baron Rothschild does not need to make a display. We are two for the entire house, when the family is not here. There are besides the out-door gardeners. I have an aide. One young man attends to everything indoors and you see how clean he keeps it. He is very careful. Faithful servants look upon their master's things as their own."

"Most servants do," remarked Miss Leslie, quietly, "but he is indeed a model youth. I should like to carry him off, to commence the breed in America."

The footman then explained that the house was once good enough, but that now it was perfection. He said:

"There are all modern conveniencies, hot and cold water, and—and a bath. I must show that." Then he led the way through some beautiful apartments toward the *salon des bains*. Before they reached it, speculation was rife as to what it might be. Visions of Eugénie's bath at the Tuileries, with its mirrored walls, mosaic floor, and silver tub shaped like a sea-shell, flashed upon them. Of course *that* was poor compared to this. They would soon see.

They reached a small square chamber, and, on one side, was a massive door in carved maple. The footman directed them toward this door. It swung upon its hinges with a ponderous movement.

"Here," said the man, "is the bath." Curiosity was so great that good manners were forgotten. Every one crowded forward. Imagine the surprise to see only a dingy tub in ordinary zinc. The footman explained.

"This bath, the only one in the house, is, as you see, very simple, but it is all that is necessary. There is hot and cold water, and, to make no mistake, printed labels are placed under each faucet. I presume," said he, wishing to appear gallant, "you have recognized the fact that this is an English bath, and I hear that there is one in every house in England and America. Are they just like this?" appealing to Mrs. Adrian.

She hesitated. "Let me answer," said Miss Leslie. "This is not unlike the American bath-room."

"Have you," said the footman, proudly, "printed labels to tell which is hot and which is cold water?"

"Well, no," she admitted, with rare frankness. "The fact is, we are so used to washing ourselves in America, that we know by habit which is which; but of course, under the circumstances, one is quite right to be on the safe side, and——"

"And," he interrupted, "madame will excuse me, but has she remarked the simplicity of this tub? It is like M. le Baron himself, modest, and quite as unostentatious. He is rich, but he does not make a show of his money, and this is quite in his style."

"Is it not a little too poor?" suggests Mrs. Squires. "Just a little too—well, a trifle too simple?"

The footman straightened himself up two inches. "Not at all, madame;" then grandly, "why should too much wealth come together? This door," patting the superb mass affectionately, "is worth ten times the price of the tub, and it is placed here for the entrance to a bath; but M. de Rothschild never makes a display of his riches, and no one would suspect from this grand exterior the extreme simplicity of the inner room."

"No," said Allani, quietly, "no one *would* suspect it, but every one *should.* The Baron cannot be blamed for wishing that which is the richest to be placed on the outside, where it will make the most show. It is a peculiarity of some *people!*"

The honored servant bowed delightedly. How well he had understood Allani's remark. They passed through the *salon des cuirs* again, and had to stop to admire the paintings. By-the-way, the subject is David and his Suite. He is returning in triumph after the death of Goliath, and is holding the giant's head by the hair, while it swings from the pommel of the saddle.

The paintings are so remarkably restored, that only a practiced eye can detect where. In the lower limbs of some of the figures, one sees a vein like a swollen cord or muscle. It is the seam where the leather has been sewn together, as when the Baron found them they had been cut in hundreds of pieces. What a triumph to have restored such great and invaluable works of art!

It is impossible to describe all of the beautiful things in the château. Mrs. Adrian retired half-sobbing to a corner of the room. When the ladies gathered around her, they remarked her distress. She explained :

"This footman is so lordly, we can never give him any money. I think that the only thing that I dare offer him would be my diamond solitaires, and naturally I was grieved at the thought of parting with old mine stones ; mine in truth, but it must be done, they will be mine no longer."

Ethel was choking with laughter. "Dear aunt," she said, softly, "how funny you are, and what a thing for you to think of. Of course he will accept a *pourboire*. They do it in the best of families." Then Mrs. Adrian's fears were explained to the gentlemen. The Count came to the rescue.

"I will sell all of mine first," he said. "Do not fear, while my purse holds out. At present we are in no danger."

They had inspected the whole house, and were just going toward the exit when the footman called them back to look at something that had escaped their eyes.

"To prove to you," he said, "that the Messieurs Rothschild do not vulgarly display their wealth, just cast one look at the wall on each side of the grand staircase. What does one see there? Oh, nothing much! only two plaques in bronze, each one worth twenty thousand francs, imbedded in the solid stone ; and they are put in so ordinary a place that no one would think of remarking their value. They are

there, simply, unostentatiously, *comme si rien n'était*, that is just like the Rothschilds. They never—" The Earl approached him and interrupted. He made a movement which was not shaking hands, but something like it. His fingers closed over the modest palm of the faithful follower. The Earl smiled and said:

"How much we thank you I never can tell."

The man reddened with pleasure, and his eyes were dancing in his head as his lordship turned to go. He was more important than ever before, as he said to a gardener who approached:

"Show the ladies the grounds," then he bowed stiffly and stood watching them out of sight. As they left the door, Miss Leslie stopped suddenly.

"Look!" said she to the Earl, "What are those two objects beyond the gates?"

At the end of a long and lovely promenade, there were the great entrance doors to the park, and near each on the outer side were two tall white posts. A piece of wood was placed horizontally near the top, evidently to mark the direction of the road. From the distance, it appeared that two great crosses flanked each of the gates. The Earl followed her glance.

"Every one has their crosses," he said; "it looks strange to see one near the house of the Rothschilds. A Christian might have them, but scarcely an Israelite." She answered:

"Yes, all of the world has his own to bear; but only the chosen race are clever enough to put theirs on the outside of their hearts, and houses."

Then they turned to look more closely at the grounds.

It costs three hundred thousand dollars a year to keep up Ferrières ; and about half the sum is spent on the garden and hot-houses. The flowers are rare and beautiful, and the conservatories seem unending. The grapes hang from their vines, a mass of green, purple, and claret color. They are abundant enough to supply the table of generations of Rothschilds ; while oranges, lemons, and other fruits thrive in exotic abundance.

As they were strolling under the great trees, Lord Beaufort turned to Miss Leslie.

"Now is the time," he said. "May I tell you what I had in my mind ?"

She looked up coldly. "I—I—had forgotten ; but what was it ?"

He bit his lip. "You said you cared to hear a moment since."

"Ah !" she said, gaily, "a moment since is not now. Perhaps I have changed my mind."

"Yes," he said, curtly, "and perhaps I have also changed mine. There is nothing to tell."

She looked amused, but said, coquettishly : "I am sure you had something to tell me. What was it ?"

"That I leave Paris to-morrow," he replied, simply.

She started and grew suddenly pale. He watched her closely, but said nothing. His eyes deepened as they fell on her face, and an intense expression came into them which, had she read at the moment, would have gratified her vanity ; but she was thinking of

what he had said—that he was going away. Could it be possible? Her eyes were covered with a film. She was furious with herself. What could it matter to her whether he went or stayed; and why did she permit herself to seem interested—perhaps agitated? She could not tell, but felt uncomfortable as one does when taken by surprise, and a long-hidden feeling finally bursts the bounds of restraint. Trying to appear quite indifferent, she looked him full in the face and spoke. Her eyes were tender, her face still pale, but her features were composed and her voice quite steady:

"Indeed—you are leaving Paris to-morrow? Is this not a sudden move? And—and how long shall you be away? or do you intend coming back? And if one might be curious, where are you going?" He said:

"I am going to Sèvres to buy some porcelain for my mother. I start early in the morning. I shall not be gone long, as I return—the next day." Then he laughed. *Le misérable!* To think that for one moment she had betrayed herself, and how sure a proof it was that she cared for him. He was so delighted at the success of his ruse that it was impossible for her not to notice it by his manner. She reddened, commenced to get angry, and finally laughed.

"I suppose you think," she said, "that it makes some difference to me whether you go or stay. The announcement startled me, not because you are going, but because I think of going myself; and who knows but that we might accidentally have chosen the same direction?"

It was now his turn to pale. He was too much in love to think for a moment that she was paying him back his own. His voice was really troubled, as he said quickly:

"You are not in earnest! It cannot be! Leave Paris! Tell me where you are going, that—that I may choose the same direction. Shall you be away long? when will I see you? how *shall* I know where you are? may I come?" desperately, "let us make up a pleasure party, let——"

She interrupted. "You take my breath away with so many questions. Well! if you must know, I leave early in the morning; I am going to Sèvres to buy some china for myself, and I return to-morrow night." He looked at her and then they both laughed. He seized her hand, and kissed it. She tried to withdraw it, but he said, pleadingly:

"No, let me keep it. Do you know that I——"

"No," she said, shortly, "I know nothing of the sort. How can you be so silly? Why will you spoil what promised to be a nice friendship, by making love to me. Why——"

Steps were heard directly behind them. The Countess came up and said, with her sweet voice:

"My dear friends, the carriages are waiting, and we are all ready to go. Here are some grapes for you, which are *perfectly* "*elegant*," and a rose for my lord, who loves flowers. Have you amused yourselves? of course, been flirting? naturally. Be careful," to the Earl, "or Léon will be jealous. But let us go," and they joined the party already gathered, and waiting for them in the roadway.

They finally reached Paris; night had fallen, and the weather had changed. Clouds were hurrying through the sky, the wind blew fiercely, and the day that had been so lovely was the last of the fine autumn weather of 1876.

The Earl said a last word as he lifted his hat to Miss Leslie:

"This has been my red-letter day. How can I thank you enough?"

She smiled. "By not thanking me at all. We shall see you Friday at the Opera, or have you forgotten the engagement?"

"Forgotten!" There was a world of meaning in his voice. "I shall not live till then. Forty-eight hours will seem as many years. *Au revoir* until Friday."

CHAPTER XXII.

AT THE OPERA.

THE Grand Opera House, as is usual on Friday night, was crowded. The wealth, beauty, and fashion of gay Paris filled boxes, parquette, and amphitheatre. In one of the first of the proscenium boxes sat the Duchess de Montpensier with her family and suite; in the one almost *vis-à-vis* sat a Baronne de Rothschild. In the third to the right sat one of the Faubourg St. Germain *grandes dames*, the amiable Baronne de Parilly. Near by was the family Montferrand, with the charming youngest daughter, who resembles the most beautiful portraits of Marie Antoinette. All of the grand tier was besprinkled with fair dames, noble titles, exquisite toilettes, and flashing jewels.

Mrs. Adrian and her niece had a fine box in the curve of the horseshoe. They were visible to all eyes, as everybody was seen by them. Miss Leslie was radiant in a pale canary silk trimmed with old Valenciennes and trailing vines of the scarlet *coqueliquot* or poppy. Her gloves were the color of her dress, a little deeper, perhaps; her fan had stolen the gayest plumage of a tropical bird, and the carved stick of sandal imprisoned at the same time the faint odor

that Orientalists love so well. Mrs. Adrian wore a Marie Louise blue velvet, the corsage cut heart-shaped and trimmed with cream roses and old point. She was handsome enough to attract any eye ; and although both ladies were dressed with the greatest richness, the rare modesty and taste with which they wore such toilettes, evidenced much good breeding, and an utter lack of wishing to be conspicuous.

The opera was "Les Huguenots," Meyerbeer's great work—great! rather his *greatest* work. Strange to say, the house was fairly filled before the end of the first act. At the beginning of the second, there was a tap on the door of Mrs. Adrian's box. It opened, and Lord Beaufort appeared. He took Mrs. Adrian's hand and kissed it in true cavalier fashion, then he turned to Miss Leslie with a cheery *bonsoir*. She glanced quickly though coldly at him, and extended her hand, saying :

"What—I am to be neglected! Do you wish me to be jealous ? I prefer Vienna, as there *every* lady's hand is kissed ; but here—bah," with a shrug of the shoulders, "the young are neglected (with a sly glance at her aunt) for the—the less young."

Mrs. Adrian smiled good humoredly, and said :

"Go on, my dear! No reference to my years can possibly annoy me. Thank heaven! we are in a country where old age" (with a complacent settling back in her chair) "is respected. In other places beauty receives the first attention ; but in France etiquette demands the chivalry of even a Beau Brummel for those who have passed the zenith of life. I hope we shall always live in France."

While she was talking, Lord Beaufort had taken Miss Leslie's hand. He imprinted a kiss on it. There was little ardor, and much hesitation as he stooped to do her bidding. Her slight fingers seemed cold and listless. She cared nothing for him, that was evident. Her very remark about being jealous was made in a tone of utter indifference; and yet, but two days before he had thought that she cared for him. A vision of the gardens at Ferrières rose before his mind. A fair woman's emotion at the thought of his going away, and the continual badinage that always marked every moment of their intercourse, these came back to him with irresistible fascination. To-night he was again in her presence. She was lovely as she only could be, yet he felt she was cold. The violet eyes were veiled in a mocking sheen, the pale face was a shade paler from the contrast to her gown, and her whole presence seemed to breathe the most complete unconcern.

The orchestra was still playing the prelude to the second act. The approach of Queen Marguerite de Valois signalled some applause. A favorite was cast for this ungrateful *rôle*, and while the limpid notes of "*Oh beau pays de la Touraine!*" rang out on the air, the half murmur of indifferent spectators was hushed. They love this scene in Paris, and much is made of it. The voice soared higher and higher, the flutes and cellos ran on in a continuous accompaniment of melodious softness, and even the most uncultivated could enjoy such sweet music.

The end of the air called forth wildest applause. Beaufort joined in most heartily, and only when the

Maids of Honor were singing the famous chorus, did he speak to Miss Leslie.

"Although I love every note that Meyerbeer has ever written," said he, "I must now neglect him to talk with you. Are you well? yes, you are looking charming. How have you passed the time since Ferrières? and did you buy any porcelain at Sèvres?"

He sat in shadow, but near enough to see her dress sweeping back of his chair. He was not visible to all of the house, nor did he care to see anything or anybody but Miss Leslie; so he ensconced himself there, evidently bent on staying the rest of the evening. He laughed as he asked her about the Sèvres porcelain. The thing was a ridiculous and palpable farce, yet she answered:

"I am very well; I have passed my time less happily than usual, and," with forced gaiety, "I bought a toilet set that Du Barry herself might have longed for."

"Why," said he, softly, ignoring her other remarks; "why has your time passed unhappily?"

Her face grew troubled. "Do you wish me to answer?" she said, looking seriously at him.

An eager "yes" escaped his lips.

"I regret, but I cannot," she responded, then sighed, and her hands idly fell across her lap. He took up her fan, saying, "Permit me," and seemed intent on examining the plumage of the dead tropical bird. As he stroked the feathers, he pondered whether or no he dared ask her more. She had been indifferent when he first came into the box, but one question of his had changed all of that, and now she

sat before him with a sad, preoccupied face. He decided to attempt wresting from her some confidence, knowing as he did that she had been to the Latin Quarter even more frequently than before. He thought perhaps that something had occurred which might render further concealment unnecessary. How far he was from divining the real truth! He said to her, with strange earnestness:

"You interest me beyond any woman I have ever known."

She looked up quickly. He continued: "I sometimes imagine that your life is not as happy as you would lead the world to imagine. I wish," with increasing seriousness, "that you would disclose your real nature to me and treat me less coldly. You are such an enigma. One moment grave, the next gay; one moment friendly, the next distant; one moment half-tender, the next cold; with a glacial frigidity that congeals me. What have I done to merit such poor favor?"

She spoke frankly: "You have done nothing, my lord, to merit disfavor; believe me. It is not you who are at fault, but I, myself. I suppose few in this world are really happy, and I am like the general run of people. In fact, I am an orthodox young woman" (he thought to himself, "yes," with a vengeance), "and must, of necessity, be like all others. You remember Lord Beaconsfield was once accosted as he was going into Parliament: 'Good morning, my lord!' 'Good morning!' 'I hope you are *quite* well, my lord.' The great Premier pondered, stroked his forehead thoughtfully, and put back

a stray lock that fell across his temple; then, still reflecting, he answered: 'I think we are none of us ever *quite* well; oh! good morning!'"

The Earl laughed. "There you are again," he said; "how is it possible to ever take you *au sérieux?*"

"Do not try," she answered, "t'would be too hard a task."

"I am not to be discouraged at the outset," he said, boldly, "so with your permission, I *shall* try, and——" The finale of act second crashed on the air. *Valentine* is refused by *Raoul*, *St. Bris* receives his daughter, *Queen Marguerite* straightens herself indignantly, and curtain falls on the grand tableau.

Miss Leslie looked half offended. "Here," said she, "have we been talking all through this lovely music. It is your fault, not mine. How can you be so inattentive to Meyerbeer?"

"I can worship but at one shrine at a time, although his music was written for gods and lovers." She began to look uneasy. He continued: "I am not a god, but you are a goddess, and I am your——"

"You are nothing of the sort," she interrupted, hastily.

"Pray, mademoiselle," he said, with perfect complacence, "allow me to finish. How do you know what I was going to say?"

She blushed, did not answer, and commenced toying with her fan, when a snap was heard. "Poor fan," he said, pityingly, taking it and smoothing a second time the soft plumage. "I will take it myself, and—and keep it."

She looked curiously at him. "Oh," he explained, "if you permit me, I will send you another."

"I should send it back," she said, quickly.

"I supposed you would," he replied, with utter unconcern, "so I will not humiliate myself with the refusal of a simple gift. I could stand due mortification were a great one rejected, but *never*, *no*, *never* so trifling a one as that of a worthless fan."

She laughed sarcastically, saying: "You seem to realize beforehand that what you send me would be worthless——"

"Worthless in your eyes," he interrupted, calmly. "Well, I will not *send* any gifts when I have any to offer; I will *bring* them myself. But this talk is idle, and a long way from Meyerbeer. As I said, his music was written for gods and lovers. When the fourth act comes on, I will not say a word. This duet, the greatest and most passionate that ever was, is to me the climax of all operatic composition. I love it. I could hear it every hour in the day and every day in the week, and——"

"And," she interrupted, "like myself, hear it every week in the year. Yes, nothing is more beautiful; and, do you know, in your dear London I have seen many leave the theatre just as that act commences? I always pity any one who has so little soul!"

"He looked a world of tenderness as he answered:

"Are you aware that you are of my opinion? Do you really love what I love, or have you forgotten yourself?"

"I might have done that," she replied, honestly,

"but I am in earnest, this time we agree. I really love what you love."

He could no longer contain himself, and said, desperately:

"Yes, and I—I love you!"

"That just makes it," she replies, calmly, "because I love myself. That is a proof of what I said. I——"

Mrs. Adrian had been neglected all of this time. She now spoke. Beaufort was getting furious. He realized that he really had made himself conspicuous with talking so much to Miss Leslie, only to be laughed at, and he had quite neglected Mrs. Adrian. He turned immediately as she addressed them:

"What a charming cast," she said, sweetly, "and how good of you to come to our box. Where is Mr. Brandon this evening? Is he ill, does he not like "*Les Huguenots*," or—perhaps we will see him later?"

"No," said the Earl. "He had a 'stag' party on hand for this evening and sent his regrets to you. The dinner was sure to be interminable, and I excused myself." Then, half to Miss Leslie, "How could I neglect any opportunity of seeing you, and how could I miss a performance of my favorite opera?"

Mrs. Adrian's voice broke in.

"There is Baronne de Parilly. What a lovely antique necklace! What balls she gives! Why, her salon is one of the most famous in Paris; Madame de Larenaton is with her. How *exquisitely* she sings! There is that *lovely* Russian, Madame Bernadotti. She is certainly the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. And there is Queen Isabella just seating herself. What beautiful jewels! what a superb toi-

lette ! and how stout she is getting ! Is it, yes, it must be the Girghenti, now Princess d'Asturia. How kind of Alfonso to step into a throne, just to give her his title ! "

"I suppose," said Beaufort, idly, "that was his only reason. A very accommodating brother, to be sure. By the way, he isn't at all a bad sort. I used to see him in Heidelberg, and he was quite *sans façon* with some college students. He makes a capital king. He is very fond of the Opera, and, while in Germany, went nearly every night."

Mrs. Adrian's voice again. "Why, I have never seen so many celebrities at the Opera before. There is Madame Viardot with her lovely family——"

"Viardot !" broke in Beaufort ; "What an artist ! what a woman ! She is a second Hypatia for knowledge. What a pity she no longer sings in public. We shall never hear her like in this century again."

"Never," said Miss Leslie. "She is great, great !"

Mrs. Adrian continued : "There is her lovely cousin, Madame Léonard di Mendi. What a violinist Léonard is, and what charming hours we have passed under their roof ! What a pity Louis Blanc is so small ! Everybody comes here Friday night. Look at Gambetta ! They say he has the evil eye, but, of course, no one believes it. *On dit* that he fascinates everyone, particularly women. Fancy calling a man *le charmeur*. And there is De Beriot, Malibran's son," with a little explanatory nod to Beaufort. "To my mind he is one of the most delicious pianists in the world. There is Sardou. What a cynical look. He is in that stage *baignoire*. Upon my word, he will

fall out of the box if he stares any harder at that blonde in the right proscenium. There ! there's the Consul General and his lovely wife. Ethel, I think I will have my next evening toilette made precisely like hers. Only those red geraniums discolor everything they touch. What a pity ! ruins satin, positively *ruins* it. Ah !" a little sigh, "what heavenly music in this last act. What a number of Americans," still running on with her chatter. "Wall Street is well represented." She bows to some one. "Mr. W. Marrs, dear," explaining, "and his charming wife. He is one of the most *perfect* gentlemen that I have ever met. Do look at the swells in the *parterre !*" She might well say, "Do look." Always during an *entracte* at the Opera the gentlemen turn with the greatest deliberation, stand and stare at the house. Considering that no ladies are allowed in the orchestra chairs, a startling array of men, swallow tails, and opera glasses is disclosed. This goes on during each stage-wait.

While Mrs. Adrian was talking, the third act began. Miss Leslie, who was calmly using her glass, dropped it and smiled at some one near. "Look !" said she to her aunt, "there is Isaure and Count Léon, and, up a tier higher, are Enrico and Lucia. How glad I am to see any one I know, when I come to the theatre ! It makes the evening more agreeable. Their faces are always a welcome sight."

The Earl thought himself, they know everybody. He listened to her curiously. She was evidently honest in her likes and dislikes. She was also constant—a virtue in man or woman.

Krauss, one of the great dramatic sopranos of the day, finally came on the stage. Her *Valentine* is always a superb performance. The Earl, at the end of the lovely duo with Marcel, said :

"She never has done better than to-night! Her voice sounds as well as in Italian opera. I anticipate a treat in the fourth act. I will listen to the music ; envy, as I always have done, *Valentine* and *Raoul*, and will think of the woman that I love——"

"As you always have done?" Miss Leslie's voice was deliciously *insouciante*, as she asked this question.

"Not 'as I always have done,'" he answered, slowly repeating her words, "because the last time I heard this opera, I was not in love, but as I always will from this night forth."

It was impossible not to understand such plain speaking as this. The Earl looked at her as he pronounced these words. She never changed color, but she could scarcely pretend not to comprehend his meaning. While he was speaking, the consciousness again came over her that he was not indifferent to her. Was she interested deeply, perhaps irresistibly? No! her reason answered that that must not be, at least not now ; still her heart throbbed strangely, and the lace of the corsage on her bosom was agitated by her emotions. An indefinite sensation stole over her. If it should be—did she love him? did he love her? She raised her eyes, thinking, thinking on so sweet a possibility. He was gazing into her face with a deep, searching look, that caused her to drop them instantly. How could she

stand such a glance? and dared she really comprehend his meaning?

She could not help reading this intense passion, but she must not let him know that she understood. Oh, the misery of the terrible consciousness that was dawning upon her!

His voice, tender, impassioned, broke upon her thoughts. He said simply, "We will listen to the fourth act together." Yes; she had understood aright.

The opera went on. When the wonderful conspiration scene was given, the house rose with enthusiasm. *Valentine*, pale and terror-stricken, sits beside her husband. *De Nevers* refuses part in the conspiracy, and breaks his sword with energetic fervor. He throws the blade that never has known dishonor at *St. Bris's* feet. Even Miss Leslie started.

"I like him for that!" she said, simply, "and *Valentine* should have loved him better."

The Earl made answer: "She probably *liked* him better, but *l'amour ne se commande pas.*"

Mrs. Adrian was enjoying the opera. She thought the music fine. She remarked on the intensity of Meyerbeer.

"It is quite wearing on one's nerves," she said, "and I would not care to hear the Huguenots every night. However, I suppose one can stand it occasionally. What a curious thing," continuing her monologue, "that this opera succeeded so well the first night. This great duet, really the scene of the piece, was not composed until after. My lord," suddenly, "I had forgotten to say something. It is

not *à propos*, but has just come into my mind. Do not make any engagement for the tenth of December, unless you have already done so. We have our first *soirée*, and I count upon you and your cousin both being present. Ethel, add your powers of persuasion. I am anticipating such a pleasant time."

Just then the lovely strains of "Ah, say again" hushed even Mrs. Adrian. "What heavenly music!" she said. "You will come?" The Earl bowed a yes, and Ethel put her fingers to her lips in sign of silence. The gratified lady smiled contentedly, and said no more.

The sweet, sensuous strains continued. The fine melodious cantabile was breathed forth from *Raoul's* lips. The music, surcharged with all that is most appealing to human passion, floated on the air with its intoxicating charm. At first soft and pleading, then stronger, and more replete with love and pathos.

The scene continues. *Raoul*, overcome by love and the seductive charm of *Valentine's* presence, clasps her in his arms. He whispers the tender avowal of his passion; he begs her to fly with him, anywhere, anywhere out into the night; away from false surroundings, away from the man to whom she is yet bound in honor. *Valentine* hesitates. To give herself up to him? No, that is done already. Is the deed worse than the thought? Yet she is still torn by conflicting emotions. *Raoul* drops on his knees, his voice pleading with all a strong man's power—"Come, ah come!" Can she, will she resist? Again the words, and yet again, "*Viens, ah viens!*" Oh, the

subtlety and charm of that maddening duet, the inspiration of such music!

Miss Leslie clasped her hands on the ledge of the box, her face the incarnation of rapt attention. Lord Beaufort sat quite away from her in shadow. He was listening to Raoul's pleading, also he was thinking to himself of the agony of being obliged to leave the woman one loves.

Ever and anon he looked at Miss Leslie. Never again could he say that her face was always cold. She, like himself, was moved, and a warmth of feeling stole over her features that he had often dreamed of, but had never yet seen.

The duet continues. *Valentine* begs *Raoul* to stay, confessing that she loves him. She repeated the tender phrase "*ah dis encore que tu m'aimes.*" Following the finale, the sound of booming cannon rings on the air. *Raoul*, desperate, imprints one kiss on her pale brow and leaves her fainting, stretched apparently lifeless at his feet. Leaping from the window, he goes to join his comrades. At the moment when the realization of his life's dream approaches, he leaves the woman he loves, knowing full well that perhaps he may never see her face again. The hoarse cry of the mob rends the night; blood flows in torrents, the apartment is illumined with a terrible glare, the cannonading grows louder, the awful massacre of the night of St. Bartholomew cries for more victims. As he leaps to the ground, *Valentine* rushes to the window. An agonized scream escapes her, and feeling that one sentiment is stronger than even the greatest of all passions, she sinks to the floor.

Beaufort was trembling with excitement. He turned to Miss Leslie and spoke in tones of deepest feeling.

"Tell me—could you—*can* you understand such a love as *Valentine's?*"

She looked up with a resolute face. "Yes," she answered, slowly, weighing every word. "Yes, I can understand *Valentine*, but I best understand *Raoul*. His passion was as great, perhaps greater, but he knew how to sacrifice his love to his honor."

CHAPTER XXIII.

BRANDON'S DISCOVERY.

LORD BEAUFORT was disheartened; after the Opera he saw little, in fact, nothing of Miss Leslie. It was a long time until the tenth of December; but there was nothing for it but to wait. He pondered over her words after the fourth act of Les Huguenots, and saw in them a distinct although covert allusion to herself and her secret.

One thing he felt almost sure of, she was not indifferent, and she surely liked him. "Like" was a poor word compared with the great love he had for her. When would this mystery cease? When could he know all? and could he ever hope to be more to her than he was at present? It seemed a distant and unrealizable wish, yet he nourished a desperate hope that sooner or later she would be his.

He called at Avenue Matignon several times. Miss Leslie was never in. Once he saw Mrs. Adrian just as she was going out. She was delighted to meet him, and expressed the liveliest regret that they had always been so unfortunate as not to be at home when he called. The day for the ball was approaching, and he longed for it as eagerly

as a thirsty traveller watches for an oasis in a desert.

His love developed in him a trait hitherto unknown to a Beaufort. He basely watched the woman he adored; he followed her carriage in secret; he saw that her visits to the Latin Quarter, instead of becoming rarer, were growing more frequent. She was often alone, and as often accompanied by her aunt.

Thank heaven, no man was ever with her. That was at least a consolation.

Sometimes he caught a glimpse of her face. Oh, how pale it was and how sad! But one night, to his amazement, he saw Mr. Gratiot with her. They had a bundle of papers and were talking excitedly together. That was the one preceding the *soirée*, and the next she would smile upon her guests with all the *innocence* of a young maiden whose life was clear and unsullied.

What was the mystery? What did Mr. Gratiot have to do with it, and who was the occupant of No. 7 Passage St. Père? His head turned, his brain seemed on fire, his heart throbbed, his nights were sleepless, his health was being undermined. Yet his part must be played to the end as well as hers. "Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first tempted to deceive!"

The morning of the tenth broke clear and cloudless. He felt cheered by the sunlight. He inhaled the sweet air, and blessed nature that she smiled upon him. He mounted his favorite steed, and with his kinsman went to the Bois. There were many

riding at that hour. The sound of iron hoofs rang over the pavement, and when he reached the woods the *allée* reserved for riding was already crowded. The fine dry weather was aught but wintry. It seemed a special dispensation. He was to see his love that day, and even nature turned her sweetest face toward him.

When they returned, Mr. Brandon left him *en route*. He was to breakfast at an old café near the Palais du Luxembourg, and they would not meet until afternoon. The cousins exchanged a few affectionate words of farewell.

At half-past two he returned. The Earl was writing to his mother. He seemed surprised that his cousin had gotten back so soon. His surprise changed to anxiety when Brandon told him that he must confer with him immediately.

The Earl instinctively thought of Miss Leslie. He stretched out his hand, and said :

"You wish to speak of her? Quick! Do not keep me in suspense. My God, has anything happened?"

"Something has happened," said Brandon, "but not to her ; that is to say, she is well, but——"

"But," impatiently. Brandon approached nearer.

"I have news," he said. "Listen. First deny yourself to every one—we must talk in secret."

The Earl gave the order and closed the door. They remained closeted for over an hour ; then they came forth from the chamber. Beaufort was pale, and his face glowed with suppressed passion.

"I will never believe it," he said. "Never! and

to-night—" wildly, "to-night, who knows if the *soirée* will take place?"

"There seems nothing to hinder," said Brandon, coolly; "we will go to-night, the same as if I had heard nothing. Her position is not changed; the only question is, whether or not your own remains the same. If you care to go——"

"If I care!" Beaufort said, desperately, "you know I care. I love her. I shall never miss an opportunity of seeing her."

"Knowing what you do?" hazarded Brandon.

"I know nothing," doggedly, "and—and I believe nothing. I love her!"

"Will you reason?"

"No, I love her."

"How will you act toward her this evening?"

"The same as of old. The same as if you had told me nothing. I love her!"

"Promise me one thing," said his cousin, earnestly; "that you will not propose to her, that you will make no professions to her."

"That," said the Earl, bitterly, "is very easy to do. She never gives me a chance to make love to her. Why should I be more favored to-night than any other?"

Brandon was in despair. He was near losing his patience. He prayed God that he might never fall in love. His prayer was unuttered, but perhaps, like many that have no words, it reached the throne of Grace quite the same.

"Will you promise?" he began.

"No," said the Earl, "I will not. I promise on

the contrary to tell her all. If chance favors me, and I feel as I do now, she shall decide for me what the future is to be."

"And the past?" said Brandon.

"It no longer exists," he said proudly. "My love is great. It is a bridge that will span all time. If she but trust to it, it will carry us both safely over. Adieu! we meet this evening."

CHAPTER XXIV.

SOIRÉE AT MRS. ADRIAN'S.

THE ball was at its height ; the pretty hotel had never looked more charmingly. Mrs. Adrian, very magnificent in a violet *moire antique*, did the honors with her hospitable American simplicity. In addition to the many foreigners present, there were the *crême de la crême* of the colony in Paris. With a few exceptions, all was cream. It will not do to be too select in a cosmopolitan city, while heaven preserve us from the *salon des déclassés ;* but Mrs. Adrian, with her usual tact, managed to bring together the rich and the poor, the titled and the commoner, without much respect for rank, and very little more for station—provided one was highly respectable.

It was a real American *soirée* in Paris. There were poets in embryo, singers *en amateur*, doctors, dentists, wits, fools, millions, and half-hidden misery, lawyers, bankers, aye—even brokers, ambassadors, lords and ladies, dames and demoiselles, with the usual run of high-life hangers on, whose escutcheons had the palatable flavor of beefsteak *au champignon* (not a battle-field), and whose money, strange to say, posi-

tively diminished their brains. Oh, the luxury of being so rich that all natural talent is dwarfed before the better inherited benefits of Mammon! When one is a reputed archi-millionnaire, how is it possible to also have the reputation of great intelligence? Mammon outbids Minerva in this nineteenth century. The world at large will never insult a rich man by inquiry into his brain rather than his bank account.

Miss Leslie was almost obliged to divide her honors this evening. Her dear friend, Countess Isaure, was resplendent in a marvellous toilette of emerald satin and filmy lace; her jewels exhausted the Hungarian husband's coffers; but, best of all, her lovely form was grace's very exponent, and the dark eyes flashed with pleasure and curiosity. This was one of her first American *soirées*, and being very fond of Mademoiselle Leslie's compatriots, she found everything they did agreeable, everything they said witty, and every new face most interesting. Count Léon Vandalin was at her side, and, with the hostess, they were really the most admired. His bright wit flashed out continually, and his laugh rang out so unaffectedly that his lady often admonished him: "Léon, *je t'en prie!* we are not at home."

"That," said he, coolly, "is the reason I laugh so."

Miss Fanny Read, one of the greatest amateurs America has ever produced, was going to sing. There was a hush, and her beautiful voice rang out with a touching pathos. She began a romance of "Mercadante," and sang as few Italians can. Her pronunciation of the soft labials disguising her American birth. When she had finished, there was a storm of

applause, and just as the last words of Cohen's *l'Aveu* were sung (in response to the inevitable encore), Miss Leslie raised her eyes and saw Lord Beaufort standing near the singer, spell-bound. Athol Brandon was just making his way toward Mrs. Adrian, and the Earl, on catching Miss Leslie's eye, smiled and came forward. She offered her hand mechanically, and said :

"I thought you were too enchanted to even think of saying good evening; but," quickly, "I will forgive you, the charm of certain voices none could or should withstand."

He looked at her seriously. "Are you jesting or in earnest ?"

"I am in earnest, and, on the contrary, would never have forgiven you had you come to me and interrupted the music."

"I enjoyed the singing," he said, calmly, "but was thinking more particularly of the words. *Sempre io t'amero, che vien la morte, che vien la vita da te*—." He looked in her eyes, "*Da te.*"

She interrupted. "Oh, I understand all of that, every Italian song is the same, and most——"

"Most English ones," he added. "Mine is, I know; but you will not seem to appreciate it."

"That's just my *méchanceté.* You explain my sentiments by the word, seem," she said, playfully, "and of course, if I don't appear to appreciate, that means that I do !"

"How kind," he said. "Are we to have the walk you promised me an age ago? But permit me, you are looking uncommonly well this evening, and not a

bit older." She raised her eyes. "It is so long since I have seen you that I fully expected to find you changed. Where have you been all of these days, and why have I been so unfortunate as never to see you? You had no reason," earnestly, "it was only my ill-luck, that I never found you when I have called?"

"I—I have been much occupied and not always well; however, I have never denied myself to you, I have really been out at those times. I am so glad to see you this evening."

"But," persisted the Earl, "what has become ——"

She evidently wished to change the subject, and said, quickly: "You say I do not look a bit older—that is not strange, I never intend to grow old." Then she assumed her usual tone of badinage. "One old thing in the house at a time is enough; and aunt just bought an aloe yesterday; we have put it beside the new century plant called American Freedom."

He looked at her with secret amazement. After what he had heard that afternoon! How was it possible for any woman to lead such a double life? What an extraordinary nature! Brandon could not have been in the wrong! Well, it was none of his affair. She could play a part, so must he; but, where would it all end? Why had fate entangled him into so hopeless a web of mystery and love? Why was he destined to desire that which to many would seem undesirable—to adore where his love might never be returned? She was looking at him, and expected some response. He thought all this;

his mind was half distraught, yet he answered, trying to appreciate her surprising pleasantry.

"How gay you are this evening! but, when—when—the promenade?"

"I cannot leave my guests," she says, airily; "besides, I don't need to take a walk now."

"Mrs. Adrian," said the Earl, going deliberately toward the lady, "I am persuading your niece to show me the new plant, but she insists that she is too busy. Will you not plead my cause?"

Madame laughed. "Your arrival is late, my lord, but the cause is a good one. Assuredly you have my help—nay, more, I insist on Ethel's showing you some attention and some aloes."

She took his arm. "How persistent you are!" she said, when they had reached the inner salon. She stopped on half seeing a white image in the mirror. He looked at her with deep admiration.

"How beautiful *you* are!" said he. "What must you think of yourself when you look in the glass?"

"Think!" she answered, brightly; "why, a great deal. In fact, it is one of the few serious reflections I make in life that gives me pleasure."

"One must pardon the vanity," he laughed, "for the wit; but—how vain you are, to be sure!"

She looked puzzled. "I do not understand, my lord. Vain? am I not a woman?"

"Yes," he responded, very readily, "but," with marked ungallantry, "I do not see why that is so great a reason for being proud."

"Proud?" she said, quickly. "Do you then call vanity pride?"

"No," he retorted, "but I call some pride, false pride, vanity. Why then, if you so prefer it, should the mere fact of being a woman be a cause for vanity?"

"Because," simply, "proud of not being a man. What can be lower than that part of the human tree?"

"The root; and the root is——"

"Underground, thank heaven!" she interrupted, with levity. "Do not let us disinter what society plants——"

"And nature elevates."

"I suppose that you think I am in the same humor that I was the day of Isaure's breakfast? Perhaps. Your British phlegm has come to the rescue? Nature, undoubtedly, elevated one man, once upon a time; but, believe me, no one except an Englishman could give Eden the modern name of London."

"I can give it a better name still," he said, slowly. "Now that you are here, I unhesitatingly call it Paris."

They walked on, with murmured good evenings here and there. It seemed as if they never would reach the conservatory. Part of the rear was devoted to flowers, and the other part to a beautiful balcony or terrace, looking out on the garden. There were steps leading down, and from the iron railing, although seemingly a few yards, the descent was really a long one. The night was wondrously soft and beautiful. The winter shrubs of the garden wore a summer green, and the little statuettes, gleaming

here and there through the verdure, looked like mocking sprites and conscious tale-bearers.

Miss Leslie approached the terrace, but half shivered. She was attired in a dress of lace, creamy *point d'appliqué;* so well suited to youth and loveliness, that its priceless value never strikes the beholder. The hot air of the conservatory was tempered by the open door leading to the terrace ; the flowers were in brightest bloom, and fairest of all, was the awakened "sleeping beauty" heroine of a hundred years of sommeil. The pale flowers looked strangely upon their less new companions, but felt not at all out of place. How shall we feel to awaken after sleeping for a century ?

"Here," said she, "is the wondrous plant."

He looked at it, then at her.

"I am more pretentious, yet more modest. Why will you speak of century plants ? I only came to look at it, an excuse to be alone with you."

"You are brave," she said, gaily ; "this is my night for showing off everything and everybody. How dare you go into, not *extremis*, but exile with me ?"

"I would go anywhere with you," he answered, regardless of her mocking tone, "but I suppose there are a dozen here to-night who are all anxious to show their devotion, and who would——"

"Upon provocation," she interrupted.

"*Without* provocation," he continued, sturdily, "offer to do as much or go as far as myself. *À propos*, who are here this evening ? I never before knew that Americans were so titled and scientific. There are no less than nine distinguished physicians."

"They are not all doctors in medicine," she broke in; "some are——"

"What? In music? piano?"

"No, not piano, but something that covers piano keys."

"What can you mean?" he said, wonderingly.

"Ivory," she remarked, sententiously, and smiled.

"Ivory?" then seeing her gleaming white teeth, "Ah—bless me, you mean dentists."

"You have divined their profession."

He shuddered. "I am amazed! In society——!"

"Dear my lord," she interrupted, "one may have more or less sympathy for a calling, but no American looks down upon any gentleman who earns an honest and—and courageous living. Besides, look at the wealth that it commands! One of the most beautiful residences in this city is called *Palais des Mâchoires.* Its owner is really most charming and distinguished."

"Yes," he added, "I remark the distinction. These gentlemen are all decorated!"

She laughs sarcastically:

"Is the Victoria cross more worthily bestowed upon an Englishman who jumps down a Russian's throat, than the grand cross of the Legion of Honor upon an American who goes down that of his Empress to extract glory, and her imperial tooth?"

"Both," he added, decidedly, "are the reward of valor and merit, but——"

"It undoubtedly takes courage for any man to face a Russian bullet, but confess it takes much

more to extract one under the circumstances. For shame, my lord! You are chary of your praise. You do not appreciate my compatriots, the decorated ones."

"I appreciate them all," he said, calmly, "but you have not done with the—the doctors. Who comes next?"

"That dark man," she said, "standing against a Cupid. He does not pull teeth out dead—he puts them in alive, extracted from one person's mouth, and in twelve seconds they are transplanted and flourish in the *bouche d'un autre*—a most marvellous but satisfactory process. He came here poor and honest; he will leave, or will never leave, Paris—rich and honest."

"Stop, stop! which do you mean? that he will never leave Paris, or that he will never leave it——"

"I beg your pardon," she laughed in turn, "I spoke so hastily that one might gather a wrong impression from my words. I mean that he will never leave Paris, but will live here to gather in the rents from his blocks of buildings, to enjoy his money as an honest, clever man should, who has earned it all honestly."

"That sounds more amiable. Next——"

"Ah, next! Some live glowing with ambitious fires, others die to be—cremated. That young M.D. speaking to that gentleman," indicating another doctor whose craft is similar, and whose wife was studying for the stage—"that youth is ambitious. My aunt met him yesterday on the Boulevard, and, after a hasty *bonjour*, he said: 'I haven't seen you in an

age, madame (they had never met but twice previously). I hope you are in good health.' 'Yes,' responded aunt, 'and you—no need to ask! Let me congratulate you. I hear you are married—and to a countess.' He looked up composedly. 'Yes, to tell the truth, I have done well. I married a lady of title. I suppose,' desperately, 'that you know she is much older than I am; but then,' looking seriously at aunt, 'I always preferred the society of ladies much my superior in age. Yes—I have done well. It looks like boasting, but I must say that my wife comes of a most distinguished stock. Her father was a marquis, her first husband a baron, and her second a count. She is very well off, and her child by her first husband makes a delightful companion for me. He is a baron, of course, *enormously* wealthy and—and nearly my own age. Funny, isn't it?' with a little laugh. 'I should say,' interrupted aunt, with icy politeness, 'that it would make your home life extremely agreeable to get on so well with your predecessors' offspring, not to speak of the worldly advantage accruing from so brilliant a match.' He smiled broadly and raised his head. 'My business has improved,' boastingly. 'Our firm, you know, D. and Co., Baltimore, had no cause to complain before, but I clear now, for my share, from two to three hundred francs a day. All of her distinguished friends ——' Aunt bowed and held out her hand. 'Let me congratulate you doubly,' she said. '*Au revoir!* so charmed to have met you.' When she came home an invitation was immediately despatched to M. le Comte and Madame la Comtesse."

"The count?" Beaufort said, inquiringly.

"Naturally," she answered, "he has become that by courtesy. This is not England, where a friendly sovereign leaves home to marry a Queen and becomes only Prince Consort. They do things much better in France, and with the usual politeness. He is also decorated," she added, *naively*, "Order 'Lion' and 'Scimitar'—clime, Persia."

"I suppose," said the Earl, to represent his own bravery and sharpness."

"Yes," she answered, honestly, "and his wife's elbows. I am glad to see you so appreciative. Aunt explained her reason for sending an immediate invitation. 'We should always respect those who get on in the world,' she said, 'I must hasten to repair my thoughtlessness. It is thus,' half unconsciously, 'that true enterprise is often under a cloud, and real merit overlooked. We owe all possible recognition to those who succeed in life, and above all to those who are so contented and satisfied with themselves and their own success.'"

Beaufort was convulsed with laughter, but said:

"No one could too heartily commend Mrs. Adrian's discretion and knowledge of what this world requires; but I am afraid, dear Miss Leslie, that under all this show of appreciation you are quietly having your bit of fun at every body else's expense."

"*Ma parole*, no," she said; "but come, we have been away so long that aunt will expect to see another cactus in full bloom by the time I reach the salon." He looked up half tenderly.

"Have we been away so long? You *find* it long?"

"I never found anything," she said, "but a horseshoe once upon a time, and that I keep in my boudoir to support a certain picture."

"Whose?" he asked, bluntly; "man or woman?"

"Man."

"Do you care so much for any man that his picture is in your boudoir? And the horseshoe, I suppose that is for luck?"

"Yes, luck for the picture's original."

"And you think a great deal of him?"

"His counterfeit is on my mantel, but his original is in my heart."

"Ah!" coldly, "that means that you love him."

"Precisely, that I love him." He started up angrily.

"May I presume, may I ask *who* is the happy individual?"

"You *are* presuming," she said, calmly, "and you may ask; but—but I won't answer."

"A thousand thanks," he said, stiffly, "I am already answered." Then, half unconsciously, "I have no right to pry into your secrets."

She paled, but made no answer. He was furious. To think that any one of God's creatures could be so heartless, so intriguing, and seemingly so innocent, when her life was one living lie; but withal, to think that he, heretofore an honest man, could be so enthralled by her fatal beauty as to follow her slightest nod! day after day to allow himself to become more and more her slave; to be almost a co-partner in a miserable secret, yet not caring or daring to do otherwise than honor the woman to whom a whole world

did honor. He was amazed that he could not think less of her; but he was not society's reformer, far be it from his self-imposed task to enlighten the world on any subject; but worst of all, he began to *doubt* the woman he loved, although in his heart he could not say that he loved her less. Until to-day and this evening, he had hoped any solving of the mystery but this one. She had allowed him to think that she cared for him, but to-night he realized that she loved some one else.

Her half-unconscious glances of tenderness were the usual outcome of the coquette's training; her sometimes sincerely expressed pleasure at meeting him, was naught but polite fiction; when she played and trifled with his feelings, she could not but see that he was in love with her. Why did he seek every opportunity of being near? Why did he pass one day thinking how he could see her the next? Why, knowing the woman, as he thought he did, had he ever allowed one sentiment to escape his lips that was not the merest nothing tolerated in polite society? Enough, he would no longer be the plaything of heartless guilt. After to-night, he would never see her again. Never again! Brandon would be happy. Ah! he drew a deep breath; but oh! the agony of those words! Never again to look into her face, never to be near her, never even to satisfy his heart with the poor happiness of looking upon so much loveliness. Well, it was better so. After to-night she would never see him; but until this ball was over, let him at least be a man, and play his part to the end. He was excited and troubled, but the mo-

mentary anger died away. Perhaps he had hoped too much. "*L'amour ne se commande pas*," that was what he had told her about Valentine. Could she help loving the original of the picture? and, after all, was there not something honest in thus avowing such a love at a time, too, when he might have gone farther?

On how many occasions had he been near throwing himself at her feet, when some wretched *contre-temps* would change all his tenderness into quasi-indifference? But now—well, she had never gone so far as this before. Any idiot could understand her words; and as to her meaning, that seemed still more plain.

CHAPTER XXV.

FRIENDSHIP.

WHILE he had been communing thus unconsciously with himself, she had approached the window. One arm leaned against the heavy framework, her white drapery floated about her, against the vines and flowers ; her face was upturned, and the light from a waxen candelabra shone full upon it. She was in herself a picture to touch any one's heart. The face which but a moment since had worn an expression of the liveliest banter, was now pale, troubled, and full of unspeakable sadness. He was touched. She was unhappy, and who could know the cause of her grief? Who could fathom the mystery weighing on her young life? Who should not but admire the character capable of so much firmness, and the will-power that could present to the world so unflinching a front? She might love another, but nothing, no, *nothing!* she could ever do or be, would prevent his loving her while life lasted. She would never know it, unless her heart divined his passion by some one of those inexpressible indications that love alone can notice. He would never humiliate himself by any declaration of love. He

was her friend, if she needed one, but—how to tell her, how to let her know? He went toward her. She half started from her revery.

"Forgive my indiscretion," he said, simply, tendering his hand with humble grace, "and only let me wish you first the fullest realization of *your* dearest desire, with life-long happiness. Next to ask a favor. This: That in whatever circumstances of life you may find yourself, you will permit me the happiness of being your friend. You are young, life is long, and the world is wide. One never knows what may happen, but one is never poorer with an honest, sincere, and disinterested friend. I will be, nay, *am*, that one."

She started forward with a glow upon her face, and held out both hands:

"My lord," she made answer, "'tis I who am honored. I accept the offer and thank you with my whole heart; but friendship," suddenly, "how do you understand the word?"

"As you do," he said, looking her boldly in the face. "Friendship can have but one meaning to honest folk. It claims the dearest thoughts and the best wishes, is self-abnegating, unselfish. At its call, one goes to the end of the world with blind, unquestioning obedience; it never doubts, never fears, but is ever ready. A strong arm to lean upon;" he looked steadily at her, "a true *heart* to confide in, if ever one feel the need of unburdening the soul; a human creature so akin to one's self, that any call made upon its sympathy and devotion is answered with instant reciprocity; but, above all, between

friends must exist the feeling that offers a blind obedience to the slightest wish ; the power to enter into one's thoughts but not to know them ; to do unhesitatingly, without requiring to ask the why nor the wherefor ; to call upon when needed, to rejoice when one is glad, to be silent when one is sorrowful ; to be, in short, the one creature in the world moved by no feeling of interest other than the complete well-being of the cherished object ; to be devoted, self-sacrificing, and, above all, true as the needle to the pole ; to be able to feel that whatever betide, there is one to call upon whose constancy knows no unswerving, whose tenderness no mother could outvie, who forgives and hopes to be forgiven, whose pulse never beats a false emotion, whose life, honor, and protection are at the service of the one who desires it, whose whole being shall be the living example and definition of so honest a sentiment as that of—friendship."

He bent gracefully on one knee and raised her hand to his lips, saying :

"This, then, lady, is what I understand by the word, and this is what I offer at its heart's shrine." He bowed low over her hand, then arose. She looked into his face with her clear eyes.

"You honor me, my lord, when you say that I understand the word as you do, and yet I must say that that is also my idea of friendship."

She seemed so reassured by his earnestness that some of the old playful badinage came involuntarily back. She continued : "But as you express it, the words are strong. Let us be guarded. Although I

do not believe it wholly, yet they do say, '*l'amitié est l'amour sans ailes*,' and, and—be careful. You have, or seem to have some heart; mine is not adamant, but——"

"But incomprehensible," he added, not unkindly. "Ah, woman, woman, who may know thy caprices?"

"Any other woman," she answered, lightly; "but come," seriously, "we have been here a very long time."

"Not long," he answered, gaily, "when you realize that we came to study a century plant." And thus conversing they made their way to the inner rooms. They had not been missed, evidently. Could Brandon but know the truth. All was ended between them. He was her sworn friend, and friend *only*, for ever more. When they reached the salon, Brandon came toward them.

"You have missed some delightful music," he said, "a doctor's wife has just sung deliciously. What beautiful voices these Americans have! I hear there is still another lady present who is a most cultivated amateur. She will sing later. But where have you been?"

"To the conservatory," she answered, "looking——"

"Looking at a century plant," interrupted Beaufort. "Mrs. Adrian's latest."

"Ah!" said Brandon, "I should have thought not the last but the first; or no, her great-grandmother's first."

"Naturally," retorted Miss Leslie. "My great-grandmother was first; my own dear granny came

next, and my mother was before me, strange to say—— "

"Mademoiselle," interrupted a voice, "a young American is going to play, but he wishes to make a selection that will please you. What shall it be?"

"Ah!" as she glanced up, "our young friend William Russel. I choose at once the 'Ballade in la bémol.' Chopin is such a favorite composer, and he plays that most charmingly."

They drew near the piano. The rooms were so crowded that locomotion was very difficult. The pianist saw his hostess approaching, and seated himself. As usual when one begins to play at a *soirée*, that moment every body begins to talk. A lady near by looked extremely contented and said, scarcely under her breath:

"Ah; now we can chat a little. I can never really collect my thoughts so well as when one is playing some of Chopin's heavenly music."

Lord Beaufort looked amused, and simultaneously the three—he, Brandon, and Mademoiselle—looked at each other. They almost laughed aloud at the lady's sincerity. The "Ballade in la bémol" is one of the great composer's most tender inspirations. The pianist played it unusually well, and at its close, in spite of talking, he was greatly applauded. Miss Leslie drew near to thank him.

"It is so kind of you, and I enjoyed it as I always do your playing, but it is a pity people will talk. How can one have the courage to keep on! My fingers would be all thumbs, and I should mercilessly interpose flats for sharps, naturals for accidentals, and so on."

"Frankly," he made answer, "I love to play in my class, for my friends, in a concert hall; but not at *soirées.* One does not lack the courage, but" laughingly, "to tell the truth, it takes courage——"

"To interrupt the general conversation," said the Count Vandalin, who came up at that moment. "I understand you." At which they all laughed, and the artist joined in more heartily than any one.

"Just what I was about to say," he continued, pleasantly, "but for this evening no more piano."

"*C'est juste!*" said the Count. "Rubenstein himself would scarcely be appreciated at an ordinary *soirée.*"

"*Ordinary,* Count," said Miss Leslie; "you dare to call our first evening ordinary?"

"Yes, more than that, extra-ordinary, and extra-ordinarily delightful. Here comes Isaure. She is on the arm of that charming Mr. Allani, but— but I am not jealous. I have already made acquaintance with an extremely pretty woman, and now she's 'my flirt.'" Countess Isaure came up.

"I have had supper," she said; "sandwiches, champagne, and some ice cream that was *perfectly elegant!*" Beaufort laughed and said:

"Dear Countess, your English is so expressive."

"That," she retorted, "is not English, it is American. I just heard a young belle make use of the expression, and thought at once that I could do so. She said: 'This cake is *too* lovely! do give me a bit of wine! what an exquisite sandwich! but the expressions I find most *drôle* were the cream being 'perfectly elegant,' and 'what heavenly butter!'"

It was impossible to withstand the humor of the Countess. Even Miss Leslie laughed, the Count was in a roar of merriment, and from that time forth everything seemed to take a ludicrous turn. The only exception was when Madame Celarini sang. Her lovely voice, like the measured cadence of the harp, was more than beautiful. She sang a romance of Schira's *Sognai*, and followed it with Clay's pathetic ballad "She Wandered down the Mountain Side." All seemed to appreciate her exquisite singing, but Lord Beaufort, who was ever a willing listener, on this occasion was preoccupied, and, strange to say, did not speak of the lady's talent. Miss Leslie chided him.

"How can you be so unappreciative," she asked, "as to listen to such singing unmoved?"

"Do you like it?" he asked.

"Certainly," she responded, "it is a marvel of cultivation and sweetness."

"I am afraid," he responded, sadly, "that I did not half hear. My thoughts were far away."

"That is nothing; at least, go and tell the lady how much you enjoyed and appreciated her singing."

"*I?*" he asked, with surprise.

"Yes, *you.*"

"But what shall I say?" he queried, desperately.

"Anything you like. Tell her how pleased you were to hear her, how delightfully she sings."

"I have not the honor of knowing her."

"I will present you," she responded. In this he acquiesced with very evident pleasure. They reached the piano. Madame was, as usual, surrounded by a

score of admirers, and one by one as they withdrew, room was made for others. At last Mademoiselle Leslie saw her way clear. She begged to present Lord Beaufort to madame, at the same time telling in her pretty way, how she had charmed them all with her beautiful singing. Celarini said:

"All flatter me, but *you*," indicating her young hostess, "I think, are sincere."

"*Toujours*," she responded, then turned to give his lordship an opportunity to speak to the fair prima. He commenced:

"I cannot tell you how much pleasure you have given me. I *adore* music, and a voice like yours——" She looked him through and through. Madame C—— was one of the few rich and handsome society ladies who believe in telling the truth on all occasions—that is to say, nearly, *most*, all occasions. And how she "got on" was sometimes rather curious. Those who knew her well admired this peculiar quality; those who did not, received her extraordinary remarks with perfect quiescence. Most people at evening parties, in polite circles, are so accustomed to utter false compliments and hollow nothings, that even the most honest take to the routine quite naturally. Nor can we imagine anything more dreadful than to hear absolute truth at all times, and especially at a ball? Could one well tell a lady that her dress was awry, badly made, and unbecoming; to another that her nose was red, and her husband, at that moment, in a *cabinet particulier* with a dancer of the Opera; to another that her maid had disclosed the cause of *certain* visits to an uncertain portrait painter; to a young

man that he had taken too much wine, and that his *liaison* with Madame —— was town talk; to a singer that she had no voice; to a pianist that he had no technique; to a poet that he had no talent; to the lady of the house that her ball was a failure, and so on to the end of the chapter? Oh, no, society has arranged things much better than that. One is perfectly justified in saying polite nothings to anybody, to tell a fright that she is beautiful, and to do everything exactly in the way modelled by the one who gave the first *soirée*. One makes elaborate preparation for the evening's enjoyment; one leaves the cares of the day at home; the neglected wife finds that another man can see charm in her; the whole world goes home feeling soothed and flattered by the half-hour of excusable fiction daily enacted in society. Imagine the uproar and discomfort, if every one, at a ball, told only what he thought the truth to his neighbor! Excuse us, please; we do not care to dwell on any such catastrophe. Lord Beaufort continued:

"A voice like yours is so rare, I really cannot tell the pleasure you have given me."

"No," she answered, strangely, "no, I suppose you couldn't!"

"*Qu'est-ce que cela voudrait dire, madame?*" wonderingly, but with studied politeness.

"It means," she said, naturally, "that I do not believe you care for my voice or my singing. You did not even hear me, and I like to hear the truth sometimes. Why do you come to compliment me?"

He looked up and answered: "How delightful.

You like to hear the truth! I am occasionally in that mood myself. Well, you shall hear the truth. I only came to compliment you because your friend insisted upon it. You are right not to believe me, for I told you a perfect falsehood. I like some voices, but I do *not* like yours. I could tell you just how much pleasure you gave me—none at all! The little I heard I did not like, and, in fact, I would have paid no further attention, had not my attention been specially called toward you."

He bowed contentedly, as if he had been uttering the most delicate compliment. Paying her back so promptly in her own coin was so rare, that she suspected the presence of counterfeit, and only on seeing that he did not smile, did she begin to realize that she had had the much longed-for truth told her. She was furious, of course, as we all would be, and reddened to the roots of her hair. Lord Beaufort attempted to say nothing more, and she had to make the best of the situation. She was equal to the emergency, however, and put out her hand with gentle grace.

"I owe you my thanks," she said *naïvely*, "but excuse me if I seemed not to understand all at once. I could never imagine any Englishman capable of telling the truth, and naturally your frankness staggered me a little. Adieu and *bonsoir*."

She turned away to receive some more compliments. Lord Beaufort, longing to roar with laughter, still half listened to her new admirer. She did not tell *him* what she told the Earl, and I think that was the last time, in the course of her life at fashionable *soirées*, that she exacted the truth from any one.

The *cotillon* was about to begin, and the hall was cleared for dancing. Mrs. Adrian had to hear so many compliments for the beautiful evening, that she felt overwhelmed. The musical part of the *soirée* finished by the loudest and most acclaimed selection. Mr. Henry Squires sang "The Star of Love," Wallace's beautiful ballad, with such sweetness of voice and perfection of method, that all were enchanted. His lovely wife then came forward, and they gave the grand duo from Mercadante, "*Il Bravo*," with the superb effect that only such artists know how to produce. The blending of voices that have harmonized for years, the perfect purity of their Italian schooling, made their singing quite unique and delightful. Madame was such a musician that she accompanied as well as sang, a rare thing for an artist to do, but eminently satisfactory when one realizes that the nicest effects are sometimes ruined by a bungling pianist, who can waltz through a scherzo, finishing it in three "pounds" without a—scruple; yet who could not accompany "My Pretty Jane" with average decency as far as—as a demi-semi-quaver, or the Garden Gate. After continuous applause, the german commenced, and soon the ball-room was filled with flying figures. The pretty conceits of the *cotillon* were more charming than ever, the favors furnished by—no names mentioned (I am not advertising any swell *fournisseur*)—were rich and rare, with real enamel on the small bonbon boxes, and real bangles in the way of bracelets. The happy hours sped, and when the "wee sma" ones went timidly out, Aurora was just gilding the heavens.

Her band of colors outvied the *cotillon* favors, her rose-colored lights outshone all that was most *couleur de rose* at the ball. Crowds poured from the hospitable mansion, belles had shone and beaux had conquered, but, above all, had Mrs. Adrian's first At Home been a grand success.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"MARKED IN HASTE."

THE day following the *soirée* was a memorable one. Lord Beaufort returned home with conflicting emotions. He could not yet relinquish all hope of ever being nearer and dearer to Miss Leslie, and yet—he felt that some one stood between them, and he turned over in his mind what Brandon had told him the day before. His heart still cherished a faint *espoir*. When is this ever completely dead in the breast? Certainly the Earl had little cause to think that he could ever be aught than a friend—perhaps not even that.

Of his own free will he had offered to be a friend, and she had accepted the offer, should she ever need one. How unhappy he was! He had every honor that station can covet, everything that money can buy, a world at his feet; and yet the one woman, in whose smile he lived, was the one earthly creature beyond his reach whom he could ever hope to call his own.

He went into the library and sat down mechanically at his *écritoire*. Some letters were there unopened, and one, to his amazement, addressed to

François Felden. He seized it with avidity and read :

"MONSIEUR—If you are at liberty, come to Avenue Matignon, at the usual hour, to-morrow (the eleventh of December). I have been daily expecting to hear of your return, and half fear that you may not yet be back. I shall not wait for you, if you are not prompt. In case you can only come later, come direct to No. 7 St. Père. You will find me there. In haste,

"*Votre dévouée*,

"ETHEL LESLIE."

The envelope was sealed with black wax, and the words "*très pressée*" were written conspicuously near the name addressed. The Earl's heart stood still. Should he go? To-day was the eleventh, and this had been written the morning of the tenth. When had it come? He rang for Bell. The valet explained that it came during the evening, when his lordship was out ; that he had intended to call his attention to it, but, as his lordship usually went into the library before retiring, he supposed he would already have received it.

"Another time," said Beaufort, sharply, "put all letters on my dressing-table, especially when marked "in haste." Bell's green eyes looked mildly curious. "It is of little consequence," hastily added the Earl, remembering how it was addressed, and fearing to excite suspicion, "but be more careful in future. Where is Mr. Brandon?"

"In his room, my lord."

"Say that I wish to speak with him at once."

Bell withdrew. In a moment Athol appeared.

The Earl hurriedly thrust the letter into his hand.

Brandon read and looked up inquiringly. "Well?" he said.

"Well," replied Beaufort, "I shall go to the *rendez-vous*."

"Are you mad?"

"Possibly."

"Can I persuade you not to——"

"No," drily, "you can persuade me in no way contrary to my wishes. Do you see this envelope?"

"Yes."

"It is marked "*très pressée*."

"Yes. Well, and what of that?"

"A great deal. The letters I found on the eventful thirty-first of October were also marked 'in haste.' This visit will be the turning point of my destiny. I shall go again to the Latin Quarter, and for the last time. This evening shall decide my fate. Do not seek to hinder. I must go!"

"Then," said his cousin, firmly, "I go with you."

"That is impossible."

"Well, not with you, but I shall be at your heels. I claim this as a right. I shall do nothing to interfere with you, with the lady, nor with your plans, but I must be near. Who knows what may happen!"

The Earl was terribly excited. He calmed himself, or tried to, and succeeded but fairly. He even went so far as to commence telling Brandon of their conversation at her *soirée*, his and Miss Leslie's. He stopped almost in the middle, however. It was im-

possible to speak of her and speak rationally. His mind was in chaos. His heart beat, and his pulse ran up to fever quickness.

"Can one realize," said he to his cousin, "that six weeks can have made such a change in me? I am another man; I am a different human being. I must assure you of one thing now, and, let what may happen in after years, remember my words: I love Miss Leslie. Whatever comes of it, I shall never know regret. One must love once in a lifetime, and I am a better man, now that I have loved purely, sincerely, and honestly, even if the object of my affection be for ever separated from me. To love, and be loved in turn, must be the acme of earthly happiness, as it is the climax of earthly satisfaction to look back upon a sentiment born only of the purest germs. I have loved her without interest, without calculation, without a thought of any thing or body in this world but herself, and for herself alone. I shall wear one image in my heart; and I devote my future to one love and to one ideal. I cannot think ill of her; I have little hope that she will ever be mine; and yet, none other shall ever have my name or honor in her custody. My beautiful love!"

"In all this raving," said Brandon, "I recognize one fact. You are certainly in love, but it seems to me that you are most in love with the woman's outward charms. You have seen very little of her in reality. I think you are in love with your own ideal. Because Miss Leslie's life is enveloped in mystery, and she has a lovely face, you have made a heroine of her, a possible victim, and your probable fate.

What a pity she is not plain! 'A homely woman,' they say, 'has more moral worth.' Beauty is but a fleeting shadow, and yet, I suppose we are all attracted by it."

"Permit me, if I presume to differ with you when you say that 'beauty is a fleeting shadow.' Venus has a wider and more enduring fame than Jupiter, who is remembered only by pedants and school-boys. So much for Olympus. On this dull earth, Laura is as well known as Petrarch, Leonora as Tasso, and Beatrice as Dante. For the truth is, beauty is the rarest gift of Heaven, and therefore is immortal. You say I love only her beauty. Well, I confess that I am attracted by it, but now that you know the value I place upon beauty, you cannot blame me for loving that which I consider immortal. Why all of this talk! We return to the starting point each time, and now I am only anxious to speak of this evening. It is already late, and in two hours I shall be at her house. How will you do? Will you go directly to Rue St. Père, or will you start from Avenue Matignon?"

"I will go near to her house, and keep you in sight all of the time. Heaven knows how much I wish this day ended."

"I promise," said Beaufort, "to end my share in this mysterious business to-night. I cannot tell why I have such a strange presentiment of ill. This letter seems to me like a warning, a foreshadowing of something evil to be. I could no more disobey its mandate than I can now tell what it portends. Yet, I must go. What is to be will be."

Brandon half laughed:

"You will finish," he said, "by making a fatalist of me. It is a most comforting belief, as one may follow any vagary or caprice, lay it to the door of fate, and calmly ignore the consequences; place the responsibility on destiny's shoulders, and do as one pleases."

The Earl looked slightly annoyed.

"You are at liberty," he said, "to think as you please, but you cannot change my belief. For the first time in my life, I do confess it, I believe in fate."

"And I believe in you. I will never desert you, and we will know your fate together."

The valet came to light the candles. The Earl shuddered.

"Why on earth do they have no gas in Paris, except in ante-chambers, kitchens, and sewers? Fancy the most cheerful light in the world being considered vulgar, because old women wish to flatter themselves that they are still young and look better with the light from waxen tapers softening the features. When I am in a bad temper, I light the gas. When I am in doubt, I turn on the gas. When I come in late in the morning, disgusted with the whole world, I turn up the gas. When I do not know what invitations to accept first, I turn on the gas. When I come to a conclusion, I light the gas. When everything goes wrong, I also light the gas. In fact, I hate to live without it. What can be more distressing to an irritable man than the soft, hypocritical light of sputtering candles? Just as one gets used

to them they die out, and the only satisfaction is a giggling, gurgling wick, and a grease spot on one's swallow-tail, and a shadow like an Irishman's curse. I do not wonder that even the twelve virgins had lamps."

Brandon laughed.

"I quite agree with you about the candles. The light is softer and prettier, no doubt, but there is tremendous satisfaction in turning a tiny key and seeing a beautiful flame burst forth, seemingly from nothing. One is so used to it that one never realizes the great benefit of gas to the civilized world. We——" He was interrupted. There was a tap at the door. Bell stood before them: "My lord dines at home this evening?"

Beaufort started and looked at his cousin. As their eyes met, a rapid glance of intelligence flashed between them.

"No," said the Earl, and the valet retired. Beaufort understood that he must prepare himself for his visit. He went to his room and changed his dress. He put a foulard in his pocket, and with it his smoked glasses. He put on an overcoat, and by chance it was the one he had worn the night of the dinner at the Café Anglais. He had to go to the *coiffeur* of the Rue St. Honoré, as he did not have time to send for him to come to the hotel. As he started out, it was already quite dark. Brandon accompanied him. They were to dine at some little restaurant, he was to go to Miss Leslie's, and his cousin was to follow at a reasonable distance.

At half-past seven, he stood at the door of the

ladies' house. Just six weeks ago he had been there, ringing at the same bell, and how things, although changed, were still the same. He went into the boudoir, and a pleased look came into Miss Leslie's eyes. She spoke briefly :

"I am glad you have come. Thanks for your promptness. Let us go away at once."

As they descended the stair the light from the lamp flared full in her face. He was struck by its dejected air and terrible paleness. Her eyes seemed heavy, as from recent weeping. She was as beautiful as ever, but it was a sad loveliness. It was not the brilliant belle of the night before who now stood beside him.

In silence they left the house and wended their way to the Latin Quarter. As they passed along the street he noticed a coupé with two horses passing them. It had been stationed in avenue Matignon opposite her house, and the Earl doubted not that it was Brandon's. His heart smote him as they drove on. They were indeed engaged in a curious adventure. Love ! what extraordinary deeds are done in thy name !

Miss Leslie sat back in her carriage in her usual way. She never spoke until they were well started, when, without the slightest warning, she said :

"I hope you found your brother better ?"

The Earl started. He was staggered.

"Better ? I do not understand !"

"Or perhaps it was not your brother. Did you not write me that one of your family being ill, you were going to Russia ?"

Great Heaven! He had entirely forgotten their former positions, and his letter of excuse.

To himself he said, "I am a consummate ass." To her:

"*Mille pardons.* He is better. It was not my brother, but my uncle, my only uncle, who was ill; he is better, thank God! Thanks to madame for remembering, and—and if madame did not mind explaining, how did it happen that she had heard of my return to Paris?"

"I did not hear. I thought it was about time that you were back. I ventured to send the letter; also, you must have expected to hear from me in any case."

"Expect to hear from her!" What would those words mean? Oh, yes. It was her delicate way of saying that she had not forgotten to pay him. That was the last straw. He reddened with a great shame, but night hid his blushes. Money, and from her! It had come to that. Naturally, when one does a hireling's work, one receives a hireling's wages. He felt as Don Saluste must have felt when denounced by Ruy Blas: "I wear the garments of a slave, but thou, thou, has the soul." Beaufort said to himself, "*I* wear the garments, and I have also the soul."

She spoke no more. They reached Rue St. Père and left the carriage, then turned into the Passage. As before, they rang at No. 7. They went to the attic chamber, and she entered without knocking. He seated himself in the old fauteuil, when she said:

"I may need you at any moment. Be ready."

He bowed in acquiescence. He knew Brandon

was in the street, and that he had followed them there. It had been determined upon between them that, when a certain length of time had passed, he should wait no longer, as all was well, but return to Rue Bassano to await him at home. Beaufort had promised to relate all that which transpired, and he would keep his word. He had been seated ten minutes, perhaps fifteen, when he heard the name, "Felden," and "come at once," called through the open door. He rose precipitately and went into the room.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FAREWELL FOR EVER.

He found himself in a vaulted apartment with quaint wainscotting and massive oak beams running across the ceiling. In niches, in out-of-the-way places, were pedestals with saints and various statuettes gleaming down. The room was richly furnished and resembled a chamber of an old palace, as do many of the ancient houses in the part of Paris. The exteriors are absolutely belying.

Upon a bed lay a young man—the dark-haired youth whom he had once before seen. He was ill, and evidently dangerously so. Miss Leslie's face was set with a fixed despair that cut into the Earl's heart. As he approached, the invalid started. In the delirium of fever he raged. "Hold him!" said she, faintly covering her face with her hands.

Beaufort went straight to the bed, without a word. How little had he expected this! The invalid became more furious. His eyes glared, his laugh alternated with tears, and his movements still indicated strength. No woman could have held him. A stout sick-nurse came from an inner room, and looked as if offering aid, but Miss Leslie motioned her away. Beaufort

had not before noticed that there was another room adjoining this apartment.

The youth, for he seemed very young, was a beautiful sight to look upon. His dark hair hung in rings close to his damp forehead; his head, which Antinous might have envied, lay upon the fine pillow, a model of classic form. His eyes, in whose depths no gleam of consciousness came, were as blue as cerulean skies, and the mouth, which quivered with eager speech, was sweetly curved like that of a child. He raised himself in the bed.

"Tell them," eagerly, "that I never did it! That is, it was a mistake. Look, he has fallen over the hedge! My God!" covering his eyes, "he is falling down, down, and I have killed him!" His voice rose to a shriek, and Beaufort held his breath.

"This" said he, "is the secret. A murderer—and those white hands are stained with blood." A sickening sensation came over him. Up to that day he had never touched the hand of any criminal. To-night he was by the bedside of one, and was in love with—Oh, horror! whither had his mad passion led him? Was this the result of honest loving? How would it end? He was now a co-partner in guilt, in crime, as he once had feared.

"Tell them," continued the voice, "that time sets all things even. The night was fair, the moon smiled upon me, and in the hurry and scuffle the fatal deed was done." He stopped and seized Beaufort's hand, and his tone was more confidential.

"We left together. She," looking at Ethel, "has been true. No woman could have been truer." The

Earl gasped, as if he had heard something like this before. The invalid continued :

"We took to the boats, and I screamed for joy when we reached Paris. They can never find me here, and when they do I shall be beyond their reach."

"Poor Harry ! indeed beyond their reach," said Miss Leslie as she looked up. "I cannot bear it," she murmured. "Go. I will call you in a moment ; he is getting quieter. He but raves. I pray you think nothing of what he says. Who could attach importance to the words of a madman ?"

"Who, indeed ?" said Beaufort ; and relinquishing his hand, he left the room.

His mind was now made up. The great love he bore this woman required some sacrifice at his hands. No matter what came of it, he was ready to redeem his promise of being her friend. A thousand wild imaginings tore through his brain. What a position for a young woman ; what a scene to assist at ; and what if the young man should die !

This last seemed too horrible. No—Fate could not be so unkind. Visions of the ceremony attending a death in Paris came up before him. He saw the officers of the law coming forward ; he saw the seals put upon the dead man's effects ; he imagined them both arrested for helping to conceal a murderer, and his blood ran cold. A murderer, a fugitive from justice ! above all—horrid thought !—the paramour of the woman he loved ! He, the Earl of Beaufort, in such a position ! The scandal, the outcry ! Oh, what had he done, and all for love ! Love ? Yes, and the one he loved, what of her ?

Alas! he knew nothing. Was she also implicated? Had her violet eyes shone with the assassin's gleam? Were her fair, shapely hands crimsoned with blood? Where was he? What was happening? He was going mad himself. Yes, that was it. These sleepless nights, this daily torture, this mad love for a woman who led a double life, were already telling on his brain. He had one gleam of reason left. He sank into the old fauteuil, and tore off the glasses. Never more should his eyes be hidden from the world; he dug off the false beard that the Rue St. Honoré *coiffeur* had so naturally put on. He wiped his face with the foulard; he threw back his hair; he held his head erect and felt once more his old self. He had done for ever with playing the spy. He was bound in honor not to betray the woman he loved. Her shame was now his; in her crime he also was an accomplice. He would do anything, be the friend he had promised, but in his own proper person. She should know all: who Felden really was, and how an Earl of Beaufort had happened to play such a rôle.

He thought of last night. Last night! ah, that seemed years ago! He saw the ball-room, and the fair forms flitting back and forth in the maze of the dance. He saw the glittering favors of the "german," and a beautiful face, the fairest of all, shining amidst the throng as does that of the evening star amongst the firmament's lesser lights; he saw the lace-robed form standing against the background of flowers in the conservatory; he remembered their conversation and their talk about the picture. Yes, this was the loved one; she had spoken truly.

Strange to say, he could not think of her as sad. The contrast was only greater to-night. They were again in the ball-room. Her head half sank on his shoulder, her hands held a knot of gaily colored ribbons fastened in a rosette with a shimmering star. She had pinned the knot on his breast, and he was the chosen knight. Oh, the farce of these germans! Who invented them? What sorrow is sometimes reaped from one hour's forgetfulness and seemingly innocent pleasure! In spite of all that he had heard, he loved her. Each moment passed in her society was a delirious joy, all the more intoxicating because fleeting. He knew it could not last, and yet he had sworn to be a friend; that was ridiculous. He would be that, but he would also be——

Hark, again a voice. "Felden, Felden!" He started and entered the room. Miss Leslie was near the bed, and the invalid was again raving. He glared more wildly, yet his voice was weaker.

The fever was spending itself. Beaufort could not tell why, but he felt almost in the presence of the great destroyer. He looked intently at the poor victim, when Miss Leslie, catching sight of him, shrieked:

"Lord Beaufort! How came you here? What must you think of me? Where, where,—" wildly, "is my attendant, Felden? How did you get in? Did he show you up? Speak!"

Beaufort hesitated. He had forgotten that he was no longer disguised, and she still suspected nothing. It would be cruel to tell her the real facts then. Another time he might. At present he would only

fabricate some plausible explanation—which he did. In his heart he was glad that she did not even dream the real truth. He would not have had the courage to face her questioning, her scorn, perhaps. Unwittingly, fate had befriended him.

"I came over in this quarter to see a friend, a young student. I saw your carriage and recognized the coachman. I asked him what his presence in this quarter meant, and he told me. He said that he feared some harm had befallen his mistress. Following his directions, here I am. I met a man on the stairs excitedly going away. Perhaps he was your attendant. Can I serve you?"

"Oh, my lord, what must you think of this? Let me tell you——"

"Spare yourself," he said, sadly. "I know all."

She looked at him as one stupefied. "You know all?" she repeated; "how, when, where, did you learn?"

"That I cannot tell you," he said, "but, be assured, you are safe in my hands. I know all."

The nurse came into the room. She held the invalid with her strong hands, while Miss Leslie still spoke with his lordship.

A bright light came into her face. "Oh," reproachfully to herself, "had I but confided in you! I remember you promised to be my friend. Do you still respect that promise?"

"I am at your command," he said, simply.

Then together they went to the bedside of the dying man; for he was dying, no power on earth could save him. The breath came in gasps; the muttered

ravings fell on the hushed air like the moans of a lost soul. The blue eyes gleamed with supernatural light ; the sweet lips opened and closed as does a flower kissed by the night-wind.

A moment came when reason seemed to reassert herself. He called : " Ethel ! Ethel, my love ! "

" Yes, Harry ; yes, darling ! "

" Ethel, let us pray together. Where is mother ? There ! Yes, yes, she comes toward me ! Her hands have a crown, and her raiment floats about her like a summer cloud. And you," turning to Beaufort, " do you forgive me ? God alone knows what I have suffered."

The Earl shuddered. Was this a deathbed of crime ? Was this an eleventh hour repentance, than which a lifetime of purity had less hope of seeing the throne of grace. He could scarcely command his voice, yet he answered :

" I forgive you, as—as I hope to be forgiven."

Then the invalid commenced a prayer :

" Oh, Father, look down this night and receive my waiting spirit. I pray Thee, forgive all who languish in misery, in prison, who have committed crime, or who bear the weight of others' sins. I forgive all who have wronged and persecuted me. I pray Thee to bear kindly with them. My life has been a mistake ; from the cradle to the grave I have been marked with nothing but misfortune. Bless my true love, my darling Ethel, my companion in life and exile ; father, mother, sister, brother, everything ; bless——"

The voice ceased, and only Ethel's sobs could be heard.

She bowed her head on his hand. The tears filled her eyes. She clung to Beaufort. "Look," said she, quickly, "he is going. Hold him, hold him fast. You are a true friend. If he must die let him die in your arms."

The Earl could scarcely realize the situation. It was indeed unique. The ardent lover of a woman holding the man she adored, that he might die in his arms. It was too painful. Oh, had she asked a lesser sacrifice! He never flinched, however, but drew nearer the poor sufferer, to do her bidding.

"So?" said he, softly.

"So," she answered, and the raven curls were pillowed on Beaufort's breast. The invalid smiled gratefully and seized his hand. "I am forgiven," he murmured, "I can now *die*. But I was praying; let us finish. Bless all who love and hate me, and those—those who are here this night. Oh, that my vindication had come below. Yet I bow to Thy will. See! the heavens are ablaze with light! I am in the garden where we played as children, and I read strange figures in the sky. We walk over a marsh where odorless flowers bloom with seductive beauty. You leave me—Ethel, don't go."

"No, dear, I am with you!"

"No, no, I am alone. The sky grows heavy with clouds—red, yellow, crimson, and blue. A great rift appears. A bird comes with an olive branch. I must take it," struggling, "there is a crown, and it is mine. I am coming! Yes, forgiven. Ethel, Ethel —ah!"

The head droops. The white hands are out-

stretched, and the angel has placed the crown on the repentant's brow. At that moment, the shutter to a window blew open. The imprisoned moon, which had been covered, burst forth from the clouds with the majesty of an emancipated soul. The room was flooded with radiance. In the Earl's arms lay the dead man, at his feet knelt a fair woman. Her hair unbound streamed over her shoulders, her clasped hands were folded on her breast, her eyes were dried in the bitter salt of unshed tears. Her pale face was the picture of despair, but she spoke not. The Earl was a still more striking picture. He was moved as are strong men, and a tear trembled on his lashes. "He is gone," he said, gently. "And—and I hope Heaven has received his soul."

Then the moonlight came brighter and brighter into the room. It was a peaceful token, and it shone lovingly on those two. Miss Leslie arose noiselessly and disengaged the dead man's hand from that of Beaufort. She placed the poor head on the pillow, and the Earl was free. The awful scene through which they had passed had brought them nearer together.

"I cannot understand one thing," said the Earl. "How could you have danced last night, and a loved one at death's door? Where, where is Mrs. Adrian?"

Miss Leslie grew calm. "Yesterday he was out of danger. Aunt has been here all of the morning, and you know how little we must have dreamed of this sudden change. We thought of postponing the *soirée*, but how was it possible? So many questions to ask, and none could be answered satisfactorily.

His presence here has been a profound secret, and his illness is of so recent a date that we could illy divine so rapid a change for the worse. I do not know how I have lived all of these days, hourly expecting the officers of the law, never coming here but in deadly fear that in the meantime he had been discovered. Now, all is over; I have only the consciousness that I have done my duty. But, alas! a terrible one now remains to be performed."

The Earl looked her full in the face. "Was there —crime?"

"You said you knew all," wonderingly.

"Yes, you are right. I should not have asked the question; pray forgive me."

"You are forgiven."

They went to the window. The night had not worn away, and here and there the stars dotted the vault of heaven with their soft silver lights. The moon sailed on in calm serenity. One earthly fire was quenched, but the world moved on the same. They looked out on Paris. In the distance was the dome of the Invalides, farther away the towers of Notre Dame, to the right and left a number of world-famous structures. The view was magnificent, as, from their extraordinary height, they dominated the city. In the rear of No. 7 was a large garden, seemingly a park. It belonged to a monastery where a religious order lived. Already the dark-robed priests were saying Ave's, and at that very moment a procession passed under a lime-walk toward a chapel at the foot of the garden. They bore missals and candles, their heads were bowed, and in solemn order they went to their

night's devotions. They were to replace others of "The Perpetual Adoration Society" still praying. Behind them followed a confused number of laymen and other priests. What could it mean? One bore aloft the sacred Host, with a canopy which stirred as it reached the lower branch of a tree. A large white cross swayed back and forth in the half-palsied hand of an old monk, and Beaufort started.

"See," said he, "some one has died in the monastery. Their prayers will reach heaven before ours, and holy angels will keep watch over your now-hallowed dead." He bowed reverently as he spoke, while Ethel covered her face with her hands. When the procession had passed, he glanced toward her:

"I do not forget the solemnity of this hour," he said, "but I must speak with you. I beg you will hear me."

She looked at him and acquiesced, faintly.

"What I have to say," he began, "may just now seem out of place. I pray you forgive me, but I have long wished to tell you something. You must have divined it. That I love you with my whole soul; that without you and your smile I do not care to live. I ask nothing of your past, it is sacred in my eyes. Do not think me ungentlemanly, but in this solemn hour receive the assurance of my love, fidelity, and eternal devotion. I swear to be all to you that you have lost, to make you forget every hour of unhappiness that you have ever known. I swear this in the presence of him you once so dearly loved, and as your life has been dedicated to him, so mine shall now be dedicated to you. Tell me one

thing: You are free? Will you be my wife? Will you, can you forget him?"

She started as if stung. "At such a time, my lord, this proposal is most unseemly. Forget him, never." Her voice rang with strange depth, and her tones struck him with a foreboding of ill. He looked anxiously.

"You will never forget him. I mean, you will in time learn to think less of him."

"Think less of him? Never!" she said. "His image can never be effaced from my heart. Why do you ask this? I have been his all. Why should I forget him? His misfortunes, perhaps; himself, *never*."

"You are now free?"

"No," solemnly, "I am *not* free. I have consecrated a vow to his memory which must be fulfilled. Until that is accomplished I shall never be free. I cannot neglect my duty. My affection for him remains unchanged, and will while time lasts."

A light seemed to break upon him. The words "duty," "vow," "affection," took a new meaning. Perhaps, oh, perhaps she had acted thus only from a mistaken sense of honor. If that were all, he would yet win her. He fell upon his knees at her feet and looked at her with rarest pleading.

"Listen," he said again, "to one thing. Forget this night, forget where we are, forget all that has happened. Imagine that we are in the gardens at Ferrières. Let me say that which my heart then dictated, and answer me truly. Do you love me?"

He seized her hand, he drew her toward him;

he looked into her eyes. Her face flushed, then paled. A great despair came over her as she answered:

"God help me, I do! I think that I have always loved you."

"Thank Heaven! Now that you are free, we will leave Paris. We will go to the ends of the earth, when and where you will. We will forget this night; you will be happy once more. No more mystery, no more hiding, and I will help you to keep a secret that shall never see the light of day. Oh, say again that you love me."

"Yes, I love you, but—but I cannot be yours."

He sprang to his feet. "You say you love me, yet you refuse to be mine now that you are free?"

"Yes, I refuse!"

That was too much. He started up; he raged like a madman: "No! I refuse! If you love me, that is enough. Nothing can excuse such obstinacy and heartlessness. You may never know how I have loved you. You say that you have always loved me; perhaps that may excuse your double dealing in your own eyes, but it never can in mine. I come of a race that have never known dishonor. I offer to shield you with my name and my love; I offer all that man can offer, and you refuse it. I cannot understand women. I can do no more. Yes, I can. I once proffered my friendship. If you loved me, why did you not confide in me? I do not withdraw that. It is yours to call upon now if you need it. My love you have, but I cannot consent to be the plaything of a woman who is all contradiction. If

you really care for me so much the better. You may know something of what I suffer. Farewell for ever! Should——"

She looked at him in horror, pointing to the bier.

"Respect the dead," she said, "and leave me. Cease your raving. I cannot think so little of myself as to accept your love at such a time as this. We may never meet again. I forgive your passionate words, because—I do love you. I will never willingly see you again; certainly not until my vow has been accomplished, but take away with you a truthful remembrance of me. I have been guilty of all you say—double dealing, perhaps, but I come of as proud a race a you, too proud to ever forfeit my word. Before the face of my dead——"

"Do not speak his name," he said, faintly. "It is he who still comes between us. You are right. This is no time. God forgive me, and help us both. Farewell, farewell for ever!"

He left the room, but turning, said: "I cannot leave you alone here, can I serve you?"

"Yes, leave me, but go to my aunt and send her to me. Farewell!" she looked at him with one long, lingering glance, "farewell, if we never meet again. Let us part friends."

Springing forward, he threw his arms around her, he kissed her face, her hair, her small hands, and yet again her lovely features; one long, last kiss, then he staggered away drunk with despair and passion.

"Farewell, I can never forget you!"

He went forth into the night. He dragged his coat from the chair where he had left it, and hastily

put it on. His brain was throbbing, his brow wet with great drops of perspiration. He hastily descended the stairs, taking at the time something into his hand. It was a handkerchief. He wiped his brow with the fine linen, and as he did so, he inhaled the faint odor of jasmin and dead champagne. By a strange chance his valet had never taken the handkerchief from his pocket after the dinner at the Café Anglais. The remembrance of that night came back to him—Allani's emotion, and his thinking at the time that the spilling of the wine in his face was a bad omen. As the sickening scent clung to him, a light seemed to break upon him:

"The world is called great, but it is really small. My presentiment of misfortune was not amiss. We have both loved the same woman." Again he touched the handkerchief: "Oh, the smell of that jasmin flower!

> "It smelt so faint, and it smelt so sweet,
> It made me creep, and it made me cold;
> Like the scent that steals from the crumbling-sheet
> When a mummy is half unroll'd."

He found Athol still waiting. The Earl stepped into his brougham, but made no explanation of what had taken place. He only said briefly:

"We must go to Avenue Matignon."

They drove like mad to Miss Leslie's house, the Earl rang at the *porte-cochère* and sprang up the flight of steps to the first landing. He asked to see Mrs. Adrian, and disregarding the footman's stares, he went into the house.

In a moment the lady came in. She was surprised to see him, but quickly comprehended that some matter of great moment had taken place.

"Go at once to your niece," said he, "she awaits you at 7 Passage St. Père. Sad news is in store, but Miss Leslie will explain all to you, even my presence here to-night. Take my carriage. God speed you, and farewell. If I can be of any service, address me through my solicitors, Harkness & Harkness, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, or at Coult's Bank. Adieu, and courage!"

When he returned to his cousin, he explained in a few words that Brandon was to accompany Mrs. Adrian to the Latin Quarter, then rejoin him at his hotel. Beaufort walked home, and the chill December air revived his heated brow. What hours of agony, suspense, and happiness he had endured in one short evening! Now, now, all was over!

He ordered Bell to pack everything. The servants were roused and did his will with blind obedience. When Brandon returned, he found all preparations made for departure.

"I leave Paris to-night," he said, "to be gone a year. I take the first train to Bordeaux, and there I take the steamer to Brazil. I will wire you full particulars." Then he told him all that had passed, making no reservation, changing nothing.

"I have not the courage to hear her name, or see her again just yet. She is inflexible and will never break her word to the dead."

"Did I tell you true?"

"Yes, true, fatally true! Poor woman, she has

suffered much. If the mystery ever be cleared up, I may yet call her mine; if not, why, I must live and bear my sorrow like a man. I shall never love another. I shall go through life with one name on my lips, and one image in my heart. You shall hear from me often. I will write from Bordeaux, and should she ever need a friend, you must be that friend until I return. She may address herself to you."

In the early morning he started for Bordeaux. The following day he stood upon the deck of the great steamer plying between that port and South America. The shipping in the harbor was a world of masts, full-rigged vessels and flying colors. The crowd on the docks was terrible. The magnificent quay, over three miles in length, that flanked the river, wore its liveliest aspect. The market stalls were thronged, and people of all nations mingled freely in the long promenade. There were gay dresses, eccentric costumes, pretty peasants, knots of gentlemen, and many a fine lady celebrated as a *beauté Bordelaise*. There were sailors home from their yearly voyages, with beaming faces, bronzed skins, and full purses, talking with foreign voices and gesticulating wildly.

Only in Bordeaux, on a fine day, could one see such a strange, motley crowd, or such a happy one! It was a bright, picturesque scene, a marvellous *tableau vivant* that outrivalled one of Fortuny's most gorgeous canvasses. Everything was animated and wore its cheeriest aspect. How the ringing voices jarred on Beaufort's nerves! He looked in vain for

one familiar face, there was none. The great ship went out of port and the Earl looked his last for some time on the shores of France. As he turned yet once again, a hand fell upon his shoulder.

He started. Allani stood beside him. The Earl with difficulty repressed a scream.

"You too bound for South America? What fatality is this?"

"I go to seek forgetfulness," said Allani.

"We will seek it together," said Beaufort, "for we have both hopelessly loved the same woman." The ship soon faded from sight.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WHAT CAME OF A "MUSICALE."

PRETTY Durham House was ready for its guests. There was to be a grand morning *musicale*, and everybody was on the *qui vive*. Even Jack, the handsome pug, had an eye open to the arrival of strangers. He left his rug in the dining-room ; he went in and out of the library, and just at the most *mal à propos* moment begged Mrs. Darmal to put him up on her sofa in the boudoir. Minnie was horrified. Happily the master of the house had not yet come, or Jack would have had his way. As it was, he sulked and looked like a dog in *faïence* refusing to be comforted, and barked at every carriage that came to the door.

The Darmals know how to enjoy life. Culture, taste, position, everything, render this family one of the most charming in the world to know, while their pretty teas and delightful *musicales* live long in the memory of those who enjoy the privilege of passing an hour under their roof.

Miss Minnie, tall, fair, *châtaigne*, and stately, looked like a blush-rose in her æsthetic dress. Her dark, curling hair clung more saucily than ever to her shapely head ; her magnificent Murillo-like blue

eyes looked out from beneath their heavy lashes; and her figure, that no gown could disguise, would have distracted even Mackart, so beautifully was it rounded, and replete with the grace of charming womanhood.

She flitted to and fro, adjusting a bouquet here, a branch there, until everything was in perfect readiness. A great many swells were coming. There was to be music—music in all its forms, in all its seduction, with all its conveniences. For the divine art can be made a convenience of, as well as anything else. It reconciles lovers; rivets more firmly friendship's fetters; furnishes delightful moments in which to discuss the latest scandal; covers up the furtive *rendez-vous* that is never lacking in high-life teas; and, in fact, is a most gracious god, whom even Apollo was not ashamed to be the exponent of.

All at once the rooms were filled. It is a matter of curiosity, that no one ever arrives first at a *musicale*, especially at a morning entertainment. Mrs. Darmal's voice was heard:

"I think the piano is right! yes, it must be. Not high enough? Oh, ah! you mean the stool? possibly. Put up the cover? certainly. I know myself, music sounds better with that up. Of course, all pianists insist on the same thing; then one must put it down for the singers. Don't mention it! No trouble at all—Chopin? Oh! a thousand thanks! Whichever you prefer—what! *Beethoven?* Oh, certainly! My dear," to Minnie, in an undertone, "come to my relief!" (aloud) "Permit me, my daughter, Mr.—Mr. Slapenofsky. Miss Darmal, Mr.

Slapenofsky, pupil of Listz" (they are all pupils of Listz), "will give us the 'Moonlight Sonata.' How inexpressibly kind!"

The hostess turned. The Slavonian artist seated himself at the piano. There was a confused arpeggio-hysterio movement. Artist and audience were soon in the throes of the M. S.

"I never hear that snorter," said Mrs. Belden, "but I think of Rubinstein. He does just pound out them chords, don't he? I wanted him to give Eleanor lessons, but he wouldn't. These high-toned pianner players think a heap of themselves. I hear he sent back the Queen's bank-note. Counterfeit? Oh, no! but regulation Royal Palace pay didn't suit Rubinstein. He envied some of the *bric-à-brac*, and got it."

Mrs. Belden was from Kentucky. She was of excellent family (all Kentuckians are), and her first season in London was most successful. She had three daughters, each one handsomer than the other. They were all present, looking like tiger lilies—a peculiar style of beauty, but not without its attractions, when backed up by the more solid material of yellow nuggets; they had mines in Nevada, sugar plantations in the far South, cotton fields, and Mexican railways. Their wealth was principally from the sale of high-proof whiskey; made in the morning, improved at noon, and sold at night, marked "Old XXXXX. Xtra fine Sour-Mash. 34." Antiquity is so quickly arrived at in America. Absorption is a good process also, when time presses. When one wants antiquity in this marvellous country, he manu-

factures it, buys it, or inherits the contraband relics of some ancestral sale. Things pass the custom-house in the new world, that cannot pass even—comprehension in any other.

Miss Minnie was asked to sing. She commenced a pretty ballad by Sullivan.

"Let me accompany you, *mon enfant*," said a very English voice, and the composer stood before her. "Oh, Mr. Sullivan, how kind, how perfectly lovely!" A train followed the young composer; his hand was nearly shaken off, and getting to the piano was a serious affair; but the song was recommenced.

Miss Darmal sang with rare taste, pathos, and charm; an enthusiastic encore was demanded. After the "Distant Shore" she gave "My Dearest Heart" with such touching accents, that all acknowledged themselves her slaves. As the last notes rang out, a terrible howl was heard coming from under an old Gobelin fauteuil. It was the pug, Jack. He could not bear music, was no respecter of art or artists, and howled away in various keys long before one could get him out. He did not spoil the lovely song, but every one roared. It was too funny; even the composer had to laugh.

Then he was taken up, petted, and endless lumps of sugar given to him. What a thing to be born a pet. Race will tell.

A young lady in black came forward; she kissed her hostess, with thanks, after the lovely song.

"Ethel!" said Minnie, with some surprise, "when did you come, and why not sooner—to luncheon, as we expected?"

"I came from the Isle of Wight, dear, and had to divide myself for the day. I have made two calls already, but am here for the rest of the afternoon. Will you keep me?"

A fond look was her answer. Everybody spoiled Miss Leslie, and with the Darmals she was quite a favorite. Two charming young ladies came to speak to the hostess. They were accompanied by a tall *distinguée* woman, who was immediately recognized as the sister of the "Sage of Chappaqua."

"What shall I play, dear?"

Miss Cleveland's voice was amiable, and sweetly modulated. Mrs. Darmal had just asked the young lady to favor them with some music, and her question met with an affirmative response. Celia Cleveland played as do few amateurs. Liszt had guided the fairy fingers, and nature dictated that which art had perfected. In a moment all were spell-bound, as "*Les murmures de la Seine*," one of Chopin's rarest fancies, echoed softly through the room. It is a real pleasure to hear one play the piano at a *musicale*, when some selection is made that does not require the efforts of a jury of twelve composers to decide whether it be music or mechanism. Beethoven is welcome at an orchestral concert, but the entire pastoral symphony is decidedly *de trop* at an afternoon tea or musical.

Beware of the names ending in "ir," "hoff," "stein," and "ski." It means hours of misery. Great professionals, when they deign to "assist" at private houses, make the fatal mistake of thinking that any one cares about seeing their technique.

Whether or no their reputation suffers through incongruous causes, is absolutely nothing to the average listener. Imagine with what delight the young American's playing was received!

She refused to respond to a marked *encore.* Miss Minnie came to present an admirer.

"Celia, dear, Lord Beaufort wishes to thank you for the lovely music, and then you must have some tea."

Lord Beaufort offered his arm. He had returned to London after a long absence, and this was the first time he had accepted an invitation for a *musicale.*

They walked to the table.

"I always think of Paris," said the Earl, "when I hear that piece. How did you happen to play it?"

"Oh, it is a favorite of mine; and every one seems to like it. But how hard it is to know *what* to play at an afternoon party."

He was thinking of a certain October night nearly two years ago. He was in a carriage with a beautiful woman, near the Seine, which looked like a silver river. It murmured and murmured on. He could hear it while Miss Cleveland was playing. How every note brought back to him with startling reality the eventful past. Her question interrupted the flow of thought. He answered with his usual gallantry:

"Any thing you play must be perfect. I hope to hear you again." They neared the buffet. "Strawberries?" "Of course!" "Cream?" "Yes; who could refuse Devonshire cream?" The Earl helped his fair companion.

There were many Americans present. Mrs. Bertram and her charming daughter, the writer; Hon. Grenville Bedford, talking as usual with the prettiest girls; Mr. Len Harte, eagerly sought after by everybody—so distingué, so rich, so charming. The Tiger Lilies had already marked both these gentlemen as legitimate prey. What a cosmopolitan gathering. Gay voices here, hushed ones there, but never the dead tea-party silence that is so appalling. Beaufort was most interested. Miss Athalie, the dear worker for charity, was present, her earnest brown eyes smiling from beneath her straw hat. Madame Vere, —Mrs. Darmal's sister—with her beautiful daughters, and Lord Schalston came in at that moment. Bret Harte was being lionized. What a confusion of voices.

At this moment another voice broke upon his ear—a voice of such fascination and power that his heart stopped beating. Absence had not lessened its music; a lifetime could never lessen its charm. It was her voice, and she was near him. He did not make any effort to move, but simply drank in every sound. She was only speaking a few words of commonplace, yet how dear they were to him! After nearly two years they would meet again. Meet, and how?

The voice came nearer. Its owner was approaching the table. Mrs. Darmal touched him upon the shoulder.

"My lord, this is indeed a pleasure! Minnie told me that you had come. You will see many old friends to-day." She turned to her companion and whispered something: "Yes."

"With pleasure, considering that—that we know each other already." Miss Leslie looked at Lord Beaufort.

He could scarcely believe his senses. She seemed to *wish* to recognize him. He eagerly took her hand and kissed it. Mrs. Darmal laughed.

"This is indeed charming! To think of your being old acquaintances. What a coincidence! How delightful that two of my favorites should already be friends!"

Dear Mrs. Darmal was really pleased. She loved to bring young people together. Without knowing why, she was secretly delighted that so agreeable a *rencontre* had taken place beneath her roof. They were evidently glad to see each other.

Miss Cleveland finished her tea. She left the Earl at a nod, to go to her mamma, and he was free. He turned to Miss Leslie, and offered his arm. She hesitated, then finally accepted it. How strange, how prosaic a meeting for two people who had loved each other. He spoke:

"You are looking well."

"Yes."

"I—I am most pleased to see you!"

"Thanks!"

"It has been a long time——" A peculiar sound of fifths being struck, broke upon the ear. A violin was being accorded to the piano. More music. Some Paganini, indubitably. His mantle has fallen upon hundreds of shoulders. The young creature present had the reputation, however, of owning it exclusively. She was a first prize of the Paris Con-

servatory, and later a pupil of the great Léonard. Voices were hushed, glasses adjusted, and the general buzz of conversation died to the ordinary whisper. It was impossible then to talk. The Earl led his companion toward the piano. Led—dragged her rather. The crush was great. There was an odor of flowers and summer air coming through the open window which was particularly inviting. They finally reached an adjacent corner. One could only see the little head of the player. Her skirts absolutely seemed to mingle with dozens of others near by, and it seemed impossible that she could even bow. Oh, the crowd that throngs around an artist, a celebrity, a prize from the Paris Conservatory! It is certainly flattering, but very terrible.

As soon as the *scherzo* was finished, Lord Beaufort made an effort to speak. They had neared the back drawing-room, ostensibly to look at a fine Bellini in a quaint frame. The summer breeze still stole in through the window, the odor of countless blossoms perfumed the air, and he really seemed far away from the crowd, heat, and bustle of an afternoon *musicale.* His mind was so attuned to thoughts of the past, that he took up his words where the sound of the fifths had interrupted them.

"It has been a long time since we have met. I have thought of you always, and wondered why no word ever came from you. Had you forgotten that I was to be a friend?" Her face flushed.

"I had not forgotten, I have never forgotten, but —but we cannot talk of those things here."

"No," said a cheery voice, "I sha'n't allow any flirting in sight of me and the Bellini."

Sydney Darmal came up. He was in uniform, and resembled his sister very much. No amount of padding could hide his slender form, and the red coat, with its glittering toggery, looked startling as red coats always do. A handsome, happy lad, a welcome sight at any time, but just then a trial to Beaufort. Could he never get a chance to say a word?

"I have brought a chum to introduce," said Sydney, complacently. "You must know him, Ethel" (in an undertone); "he's an awfully good fellow, and my particular friend.'" Ethel smiled:

"Your friends are always welcome." Then she bowed amiably and extended her hand, American fashion. Sydney's voice was orthodox.

"Miss Leslie, allow me to present the Hon. Hamilton Lockwood." Then he turned to Beaufort before one could speak.

"I say, old fellow, when did you get back? Where's Brandon? The last time I saw him was at the Star and Garter—Derby day. He was having a jolly time with three good-looking chaps, tremendous swells. I did not get a chance to speak to him—hope he is well. An awful funk, wasn't it, when that beast of a Hungarian's horse took the Derby? I lost a clean hundred. Ethel," abruptly, "have some tea. You have had some? Well, I think I'll leave and get a cup."

"I have had tea, cake, and strawberries," said Ethel, calmly; "yes, even Sally Lunn."

"By George! strawberries, cake, Lunn! I'll have

some myself. The fact is, I have been off my feed for several days. Had some good news this morning, and my appetite is just coming back."

Sydney burst away. He stopped to speak to his two lovely cousins, who had just come in with Mrs. Darmal's sister. He dragged Miss Eleanor off to the table.

The Hon. Lockwood was talking to Miss Leslie. Beaufort's face was strangely fixed, but he looked less unhappy when Minnie came up and took the young gentleman away. One of the American tiger lilies wanted to know him. He was doomed.

Beaufort turned quickly to Ethel. "I scarcely know what to say," he began, "nor how to say it. Why are you always called 'Miss?' Would not 'Madame' be more in keeping with the weeds you wear?"

She looked amazedly at him.

"What do you mean, my lord?"

His voice trembled. "Are you still masquerading? Will you always be Mademoiselle Leslie?"

"Probably," she said, coldly, "until I am married."

"A second time?"

"A second time? no, a first."

Her assurance staggered him. What could she mean? Something in her voice said that she was not jesting now. A light seemed to break upon him.

"Great God!" he said, faintly, "you have never been married? Who—who was the man that died in the Latin Quarter?"

She turned very pale. Her slender gloved hands

trembled as they clasped her fan; then a blush, deep and beautiful, overspread her countenance. She said, brokenly:

"You told me you knew all. I thought you did. No, he was not my husband."

She stopped speaking. His eyes were filled with eagerness and dread. What was she about to confess?

"He was——"

"My brother," she responded, brokenly. "I—I thought that you knew all. Why did you tell me that you did? What must you have thought of me?"

His face was glorified with the undying love. Then he said:

"I have made a terrible mistake, but my life shall atone for it. I must speak with you. Where, when?"

"I am not in London. I go to the Isle of Wight to-morrow morning. I am visiting Isaure at Shanklin," she answered.

"I will go with you. May I come? Please say yes."

A new, strange joy was taking possession of her. After all that had passed, all that she had suffered, was she ever to be happy? He continued:

"I will explain there what I had heard and thought of you; and you—you shall tell me everything. You know how I must love you, but you cannot know the whole truth. After the *musicale* is ended——"

"Yes," she interrupted, "we may speak again, but

no more now. We have already attracted attention."

A very handsome lady came toward them. She was that *rara avis*, a well-dressed English woman. She greeted Ethel, and bowed to Beaufort.

Miss Leslie spoke.

"Dear Mrs. Langley, how sweet of you to say *un petit bonjour!* Is not this a charming *musicale?*"

Mrs. Langley assented.

"I am just running away now, my dear. It is getting late, and my worse half will be waiting. When will you lunch with us?"

"Very soon. Next week, perhaps. I am off for Shanklin to-morrow, but will not stay long. Why are you going so early?"

"Early? It is nearly six. I have a dinner and theatre party, so haven't another moment to stay. Don't forget to let me hear from you soon. *Au revoir.*"

"I am coming too," Ethel said, and she walked toward the first entrance. Mrs. Langley knew the Earl by name and reputation. Ethel presented him. It is not the fashion to introduce people in society, but it is sometimes very agreeable to know whom one is talking to. In Europe, it is taken for granted that people who meet at the same house may speak to each other without special introduction. It is a compliment paid and exacted by the host or hostess. In America, pretty women glare at each other and never speak. Should a lady who has lived abroad by any chance address her neighbor, she will receive a curt, monosyllabic answer, if

any at all, and will be made to feel like wishing to drop through some adjacent cellar-way. The rudeness of the average American woman and man is proverbial. The women have grace, yes; beauty, undoubtedly; manners, none at all, unless very bad. Abroad there is no stiffness at the teas, none at balls, and *soirées* are absolutely *sans cérémonie*. In America, young ladies are miserable if their dancing cards are not full; but perdition seize the gentleman who dares to speak without having been properly introduced.

In Europe, no girl goes supperless to bed, or rests partnerless at a ball. Any gentleman may step up to a lady and speak to her—of the weather, ask her to dance, or to have an ice. It is not an affront, no matter whether he knows her or not. The acquaintance may be kept up afterward, or die a natural death then and there; it is optional with both parties. But the respectability of people meeting under the same roof is taken for granted, and it is a compliment paid the hostess to mingle and converse freely with one and all. She has honored you by an invitation to meet her guests, and you must honor her by treating them with proper consideration, at least, during the acceptance of her hospitality.

The Earl was happy. He was charmed with any of Miss Leslie's friends, and he found Mrs. Langley particularly agreeable. He wished she would ask him also to luncheon, but she didn't. English ladies do not invite people to their houses on such short acquaintance as do Americans. It takes, on an average, two years, or certainly two seasons, to find

out whether one's, so to speak, dearest friend (English, of course) is really more than polite. It is a difficult national problem. Some individuals, however, have solved it to their entire satisfaction.

It was impossible for the Earl to say a word to Miss Leslie. She could not get away as soon as she expected, however, for some of her friends had just arrived.

There were the lovely Misses Emily and Florence de Mosenthal, nieces of the great Vienna poet, with their handsome brothers. There were Major Samson, with his pretty wife, and Mrs. Laurie, one of the loveliest of American belles who have married Englishmen, and a number of others, all of whom were known to Ethel. How happy she seemed, and how happy he was, now that even a slight understanding existed between them!

The *musicale* was going on. More crowds, more music. Christine Nilsson dropped in, looking lovely in a black Spanish lace dress. Mrs. Fred. Sullivan was helping Bret Harte to some tea when Rizelli, a delightful tenor, commenced to sing one of Tosti's songs. It was, in truth, a charming afternoon, and dear Mrs. Darmal was justifiably proud of her success.

Beaufort finally secured an opportunity of saying a word to Miss Leslie.

"May I accompany you to Shanklin to-morrow?"

"No, I fear not; *cela ne serait pas convenable.*" Then she laughed—a low, sweet laugh that gladdened his heart. How long it had been since he had heard its music!

"You are right," thoughtfully. "I will go to the Isle of Wight by the late train to-night. I will venture an impromptu call on Madame la Comtesse, and we will all come to meet you at Cowes to-morrow morning. What do you think of it? I am a wretch," hastily; "where is Mrs. Adrian?" and again, "what do you think of my plan?"

"It is perfect; nothing could be more delightful. And—and Mrs. Adrian" (accent on the Mrs.) "is very well. She has gone to-day to the Tower. After having been in London off and on for five years, she decided to accompany some old friends there. Later she was coming here, but I am afraid something has detained her. Your 'love?'" with mock surprise; "of course I will give it to her. She is sure to accept it. You are one of her prime favorites."

"Dear Mrs. Adrian!" with an affectionate look at Ethel. "I always knew she was a woman of taste. I think—I think she liked me more than you did yourself."

"Possibly—I—I never *liked* you!"

"Good-by!" tenderly, "until to-morrow." Then he made his way toward the door.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SHANKLIN-CHINE.

"THERE she is—*la voilà!*" said the Countess.

"There they are," said the Count, as the little steamer put into Cowes, and he saw Mrs. Adrian and Miss Leslie standing on the deck. The Earl was as impatient as any Englishman dared be. His face wore a most expectant look and his eyes deepened as he saw her approach. It was the work of but a moment, and Mrs. Adrian's hearty "How do you do?" went quite to Beaufort's heart.

He took Ethel's hand, looked into her eyes, and murmured one word of love.

"Hurry! hurry!" said the Count, "or we shall miss the terrible but only tramway to be had at this hour." Then they all hurried and clambered into the convenient, airy vehicle.

When they reached Shanklin a carriage was waiting. They drove to Hollier's Hotel, and in no time were quite at home. Isaure's beautiful rooms on the ground floor were bright with the thousand and one pretty things that a woman of taste always manages to have about her. A bird sang in a golden cage; flowers decked mantel and *étagère*, and last, but not

least, in every conceivable spot were her constant companions, the photographs of her friends. A low window opened out on a charming lawn, and to the right was seen a lawn tennis set. An early game had been interrupted to go and meet Miss Leslie. It was just eleven o'clock, the hour when morning brightens into noon, when birds' voices are beginning to be tired, when the busy throng of bathers come radiant and hungry from the beach, when horses gallop through the town, *table d'hôte* bells are ringing, the omnibus arrives, and the busy day at a seaside resort is fairly under way.

The Earl was seen in close conversation with Ethel.

"What is it?" said Isaure, "flirting again?"

Count Léon looked wise, Mrs. Adrian complacent, while Ethel blushed—yes, actually blushed. Quite the orthodox thing for a young lady to do under certain circumstances. Beaufort came toward the Countess, half dragging Miss Leslie with him.

"It's a flirtation," he said, "which shall go on through life. I love Miss Leslie——"

"Nonsense," said Isaure, mockingly.

Beaufort smiled. "No, not nonsense. I am serious, she is serious, and has promised to marry me."

"Wedding bells at Shanklin!" The Countess's voice betrayed her great pleasure.

"Perhaps," said Ethel, "but *not* mine. Why, I have scarcely yet said that I would——"

"Ethel!" said Beaufort, severely; "you are to do exactly as Mrs. Adrian says, and she will plead my cause, I know." Then he rushed up to her aunt. He

talked in an undertone, but with such vehemence that a tempest seemed suddenly to have invaded the apartment.

"We will talk it over," said Mrs. Adrian; and that was all the answer she would give. Beaufort had to be satisfied. The Countess Léon and Mrs. Adrian went to have a game of tennis, while the two lovers sought a corner of the garden and sat on a rustic bench under an old tree. Lovers always do that. There is always an old garden, always an old tree, and naturally follows the old story told while sitting on an old rustic bench. After a few words Ethel spoke:

"I must get in shadow, dear, for what I have to say is too sad to bear the sunlight. Yet, what more appropriate hour than high noon in which to give to the light of day the true story of a long-cherished grief? I will be brief, as there is much to say. My father was a Southern planter, and married, when very young one of two sisters, daughters of a neighboring friend, both heiresses to great wealth. He died shortly after my birth, and my mother in two years married again. She chose wisely, as my step-father filled almost my own father's place. He was indeed dear to us. One child, a son, was born to them, my half-brother, Harry Desmond (that was my step-father's name), the young man whom you knew in Paris. We loved each other with the rarest affection that could exist between brother and sister, and so fond were we that we could not bear to be separated. Harry was always a wild boy, and before he was six years old my mother's second husband died. She followed very soon after, leaving us

quite alone, and to her sister, Mrs. Adrian, was confided her two children. Harry was sent to a boys' school, but finally came back to a very good college near home. I was everything to him, and my mother —whom I had always loved so tenderly, begged me never to forsake my brother, and above all, to watch over him most carefully. He was getting wild, running off nights on hair-breadth escapades, and I felt really terribly worried at times. After her death (my dear mother's), Mrs. Adrian came to live with us at the old homestead. My health at this time was so delicate that the doctors ordered me to Europe. Aunt and I came to England, and visited a paternal uncle who was attached to the United States Legation at the Court of St. James. After a pleasant sojourn in London we travelled. I stayed a year in Germany at school. We then went to Spain, then to Italy, and from there came back to Paris. We met many people, and the friends I have now are mostly those I made at that time. We remained abroad two years, returned to America, then came back again, and so on every summer, until the season you met me in Paris. On my return home we always kept open house, and on one of these more recent occasions Mr. Allani came to see us. He had letters from my uncle. Harry was so wild that we scarcely ever dared speak of him. I think Mr. Allani, with many others, never knew that I had a brother; at least he might have thought of him as a school-boy, and he ignored the fact that his name was different from mine. The next time we came we determined to——"

"What about Allani?" interrupted Beaufort.

"I will tell that later. You—you are patient?" He smiled and stroked her hand fondly. She continued:

"We determined to bring Harry with us. I was again ill and could not stay in America; besides, his continued escapades made our life there miserable. Why, he once ran away, was gone nearly a year, and reported dead. He was then within two months of his graduating, and six months later would be of age. Although I hated to go, it was decided that we should await him in London or Paris, and everything was prepared this time for a lengthened stay in Europe. We started in May, called, I believe, and rightly, the unluckiest month in the year. We had barely arrived in Paris, after a short trip over England, when one night I received a letter in a strange hand, with another enclosed from Harry. 'Come to me at once,' he said; 'I am in deep distress. Say nothing to Aunt, and follow the bearer of this.' I had already a presentiment of evil, and imagine how quickly I obeyed his summons."

"My dear love," said Beaufort, pressing her hand, "could I but have been near you."

She looked gratefully at him and continued:

"We went to an old house near the Rue Vaugirard, in the neighborhood of the Catacombs. There I found him. He was disguised and told me a terrible tale. My misgivings had not been false. About a week after I left, a party of students started out on a hunting escapade. Of course it was impossible to shoot during that season, but they were determined on some fun. After a night of drinking

and carousal, they were in the act of going over a hedge into Judge Carden's grounds, when they were detected, taken for poachers, and a frightful scene ensued. One of the keepers was killed, and just as the judge's only son was coming into the fracas, Harry fired. Two shots were heard simultaneously, and young Carden fell. There had been a family feud for years between my father and the judge. Of course the next day the whole thing came out. He declared that Harry had killed his son intentionally, and as soon as the proper inquest was concluded, he had him indicted for murder.

"In the meantime Harry was told of this. Wild with despair at the result of what they had thought would be a harmless lark; losing his head, he accepted unwise counsel and fled the country. A faithful negro, once one of my father's slaves, helped him to fly. Through brake and marsh, through swamp and fen, they made their way to New Orleans. His escape was so well planned that none had imagined such a step.

"He took a steamer for Havana, then one for New York, and from there sailed to Havre. He had but just arrived in Paris when I received his letter. I was broken-hearted when I knew all, but I would not abandon my brother, although a fugitive from justice. I got him off to Brussels, when suddenly back he came to Paris. The Southern American papers were filled with accounts of the affair, and I was in daily fear that he would be taken. His coming away was most foolish. Surely he never would have been convicted, but how could he tell that?

And another worse thing, he believed himself guilty——"

"He believed himself?" repeated the Earl; "was he then not guilty?"

"It has been proven since that he was not, but alas, vindication came, as it often does, too late!"

Her eyes filled with tears, but she bravely continued.

The Earl wiped them away. "My own love, what you have suffered! but in future, there will always be one strong arm to lean upon, one hand to dry your tears, should they ever flow."

"I have nearly finished, but I can never think of Harry's unfortunate life and early death without losing utter command of myself.

"He determined to stay in Paris, and it was decided that he should rarely leave the house, if ever, for some time. I was to bring him my letters and news, if any came. I had friends in America, whom we had interested, some for love and others for money (how often have I thanked God that I was not poor), but my dearest and truest aid has been Gratiot. I confided in him as much as I dared, and he helped me all in his power. It was feared that my going alone to the Latin Quarter would attract attention; also, that in case of an emergency I would need some faithful attendant at hand. A man was found who could fill that place."

Beaufort groaned and muttered to himself: "Yes, with a vengeance."

"What did you say, dear? I thought you spoke?"

"Nothing, nothing; I was only thinking."

"The day my new attendant was to come, a large package of valuable letters had arrived at the Legation. Mr. Gratiot sent them by the man, who was instructed to deliver them into no hands but mine."

"And you received them?" The Earl's voice was steady.

"Yes, but a curious thing happened. The man who was to bring them to me lost them. They were found by some one who, without any cause, voluntarily accepted the position offered. I presume he was some poor fellow out of employment."

"Decidedly!"

"You said, dear——"

"Nothing—nothing! Pray continue, I am most interested."

"And I must say he served me extraordinarily well. His name was Felden. Why! you saw him that night—don't you remember him?"

"Perfectly!"

"He disappeared there and then. I felt some way he would never betray me, but his was a strange character. He never asked for any hire, and I sent him a check for five thousand——"

"Where to?" said Beaufort, eagerly.

"To Meurice's Hotel. Five thousand francs!"

"He never got it," said he, excitedly.

"Why, how do you know?" with surprise.

"I suppose, from your saying that he 'disappeared then and there,' that you had never even heard from him."

"No, I never have, and stranger still, the check

has never been presented for payment. I sent it with instructions to be kept until called for in person."

"How did you know that he was not the one Mr. Gratiot sent with the letters?"

"It is curious, but things come about strangely. About two months ago a man called at the Legation. He asked to see Mr. Gratiot, and explained all; that he had lost the package and did not dare tell them at once, but that the following day, when he went to confess the loss, to his amazement he was informed that it was all right. The lady was well pleased with her attendant, and had received the letters safely. He was too much relieved to think of explaining any further, but got another situation. Curiosity led him to tell the truth at this late day; also, being out of employment, he wanted another place. He had never been to the Legation since."

"What kind of a looking man was he?"

"Well, that is stranger than all. He looked as much like Felden——"

"Oh!" with a little grimace.

"What is it?"

"My love, I—I stuck a thorn in my finger."

"Let me take it out. Why, there's none there!" surprisedly.

"It was an excuse that you might hold my hand." Who could not forgive so simple an artifice?

"He looked as much like Felden as one man could resemble another, except that——"

"That what?"

"Some way he did not strike Mr. Gratiot as being

so much of a gentleman. So he explained to me. I never saw him. But what a long diversion——"

"Of course, how could he look like a gentleman—as much like one as—as Felden. I—you know I remember Felden. I saw him that night."

"Yes, that night. Well, we are getting back to it. Harry fretted continually, and finally came down with a sharp attack of fever. I can never tell you of our anxiety, nor how I hated to keep up appearances before the world; still it was the only thing to do. Some old friends in Paris had heard some tale about Harry and a college escapade—many believed him dead—but no one could exactly say what it was. My going in the world as if nothing had ever happened, was the only possible thing to do to avert suspicion while taking care of him. When he fell ill we were desperate, but three days before the *soirée* the doctor pronounced him quite out of danger. To think of my dancing when my only brother lay dying! It is too horrible. A relapse the very day, the tenth, caused the fatal result. You know all the rest, or nearly all. I thought I would see or hear from you again, but feared that even your love could not stand so fearful a trial. The papers were filled with sensational stories of a mysterious death in the passage St. Père, and the whole miserable truth came to light; but only the name of Desmond was prominent. I could not stay in Paris; we have travelled ever since, but I never forgot a vow made the dead, to clear up his memory. By my own efforts, detectives placed on the track soon had the proper clue. About a month ago, the head-keeper

on the Carden estates confessed that he had taken that opportunity to avenge a slight paid him years before by the judge's son. What a fearful thing is revenge, and how often must the innocent suffer for the guilty! Only one thing has supported me in peace during these last terrible years. I am a fatalist——"

"Ah! my love, so am I. You will know why later."

"A firm believer in destiny," she continued. "What is to be will be. I could only reconcile myself in that way to Harry's premature death. His dreadful misfortunes commenced in early youth. He ended a mistaken life perhaps in the most honest way possible. It is a horrible thing to say or think, but I sometimes imagine that he was taken away to be spared a worse fate."

"You look at it in the right way, my love. Undoubtedly a wiser power took into his keeping that which a mother's love could no longer protect."

"But you, yourself; now tell me what became of you. Why I never received a word, a line, a token."

"I started for Bordeaux the next day. I sailed for South America the following one. I went with —with Allani."

"Allani?" she said, then, blushing, dropped her eyes.

"Yes, Allani."

"I once knew him—but I told you."

"Thank God!" said Beaufort, fervently, "that you hid nothing from me. He is an old friend, and told me that he loved you."

"Yes, once——"

"Now he loves you still, I fear, but I dare not be jealous, my darling. You—you are quite sure that you do not care for him now?"

"As a friend, yes. But I have nearly told you all. As I said, I met him at home two years before I came away. I thought him every way charming, perhaps a little original, and I may have allowed him to see it. When I felt convinced, however, that I could never love him, I told him so honestly. He took my decision with such gentlemanliness and such generous feeling, that I always think of him with real friendship. He wrote me a letter which——"

"Have you it still?"

"Yes, and if you permit me, I shall always keep it. You may read it. It seems to me the work of an honest, earnest man."

"Allani is a gentleman, and one of my dearest friends. He is an Englishman of Italian descent. His grandfather was a Piedmontese noble, and one of the greatest writers and philosophers in Italy. We have been for years, as our fathers had been before us, the best of friends. By a strange chance we found ourselves on the same steamer, going to South America. We had an intuitive understanding, a feeling that we both loved the same woman, still your name was never mentioned but on one occasion between us. I felt sorry for him then, I feel more sorry now. His loss is my gain."

A handful of blossoms were thrown into Ethel's lap. Looking up, they saw the Countess standing near. She laughed, and held up a finger.

"Do you know what time it is? No? Nearly one o'clock. Everybody is waiting for *déjeuner à la fourchette*. Only people in love can be so supremely selfish. We have been watching you, and Léon is starved. Come at once."

Beaufort rose reluctantly, Ethel with alacrity.

"How thoughtless we have been—let us go at once," she said.

"I have also a confession to make, and beg you" (with much solemnity) "to appoint a rendezvous for this P.M. Make it as early as possible."

Countess Isaure had neared them, and heard the last few words. She spoke up, gaily:

"Nothing can be done this afternoon. No private rendezvous. Ethel must lie down after breakfast. We drive at three, play tennis at five, and have a dinner to-night with the Count and Countess de Fiorani. Do not interrupt—" Beaufort is all attention—"after the dinner we are going to have a long promenade."

"Just the thing," said the Earl to Ethel. "I will wait until then to make full confession; I can have you all to myself."

"Yes, by the seashore; but it's not at all secret," playfully, "with the wicked eyes of the phosphors looking on. I shall feel most uncomfortable."

"You are a selfish woman. You don't want even the fishes to see you. I——"

"Come to breakfast. *Venez, je vous en prie.*"

"*L'on vient, madame la Comtesse,*" and all walked toward the house.

Before the Earl would sit down, he begged to send

some despatches. He exhausted a handful of blanks, dashed off hasty messages, looked very wise, wholly content, and announced himself as ready at last. He was even hungry. It is strange how the most violent of passions fades into insignificance when one has had no breakfast. Love and chops—precisely! Oh! greatest panacea to all ills—a good digestion!

CHAPTER XXX.

THE OLD, OLD STORY.

SHANKLIN-CHINE is one of the prettiest villages on the Isle of Wight. Shanklin has a history, and the word "Chine" means "chink," or something similar in old Saxon. The origin of the Chine was a small stream of limpid water which, falling over the cliff for centuries untold, has worn a peculiar channel some two hundred feet deep, with almost equal width. The sides are covered with almost tropical verdure. Hanging vines, clematis, creeping ivy, and laurel, with the loveliest of flowering shrubs, deck the sides, top, and foot of the cliff. Birds sing at all seasons, water trickles and ripples in and out through the matchless verdure, and in the merry month of June nightingales add their lovely voices to the chorus of sweet-throated warblers. The brushwood is almost too dense, and a deep basin of dark, discolored sandstone holds the clear waters. All kinds of pebbles, shells, and water plants (*plantes grasses*) lie beneath the surface. They look up with their mocking eyes; the tiny blossoms with faint, half-hidden bloom, stretch out their tendrils, clinging to the old rock; a myriad of living things creep

about in their enchanted basin, and life in sweetest nature abounds.

Some fairy with magic wand must have made the Chine. She struck the rock with her silver sceptre; she breathed all of her sweet breath upon the deadened sandstone; she looked into the water with her clear eyes—hence the mirrored surface of the pool. Or perhaps some mermaid—Undine—has left her traces, Lorelei her souvenir; or perhaps a fond mistress, sighing for her swain. Whose is the spirit that has bestowed such a heritage of love, romance, and poetry upon this beautiful spot? Was it, could it have been Juliet?

> "Her eye in heaven
> Would through the airy region stream so bright,
> That birds would sing, and think it were not night."

How many lovers have pledged vows to the murmur of the waters of the Chine! how many Juliets have stood beside its verdant cliff!

After dinner it was proposed visiting the Undercliff or Landslip, also to see the artificial ruins of Cook Castle by night. It is impossible to find a place in the world more beautiful than this celebrated Undercliff.

Imagine the picturesqueness of the scene. There are sylvan dells, rocky terraces, deep ravines—one continuous and splendid succession of rich and varied nature. The Landslip communicates with the beach, which is most beautiful and safe. Every one goes to see the Undercliff; every one *must* see the ruins.

Countess de Fiorani and her husband, the Count, were old friends, and a welcome addition to the party. The Countess was fair—blonde, blue-eyed, with the slight *embonpoint* that so well becomes some women. The Count was slender as a young sapling. His eyes were fine and dark, his smile particularly gay, and, together, they were a bright, agreeable, and most charming couple.

Beaufort, of course, monopolized Miss Leslie. As they were walking on the beach, Countess Isaure came to them. What a pretty woman she was, to be sure. Her eyes were dark, sparkling, yet tender. Her mouth was small and very mobile; her figure charming; her waist so small that one's two hands might easily span it. In French she had *une taille adorable*, and in English—well, it's quite the same thing, but no language can exaggerate her sweet naturalness of manner or affectionate solicitude for those she loves. She came toward them, and said in her pretty English:

"You are certainly two dreadful spoons; but I suppose we must forgive you. Mme. de Fiorani is already *au courant de tout*, and——"

"Spare my blushes," said the Earl.

"Permit me to hide myself," said Ethel, "or jump into the sea. It is quite too dreadful. Why," turning to Beaufort, "do you make yourself so conspicuous?"

"Why do you make me make myself so conspicuous? It is your fault. How can I help showing that I love you?"

This was unanswerable. He took her hand and

kissed it—kissed it many times. She evidently did not object.

The Countess groaned, and held up her white *manina.* Her eyes glittered as brightly as the gems on her fingers. The tone of her voice was airy and mocking.

"Yes, she knows all. We have decided to pay no attention to you two, only our direction now is toward the old ruins. Don't get lost, and follow us if you will; and, my lord, pray take good care of my guest. *A tout-à-l'heure!* I am so glad that you have found out that you love each other. I have quite decided on my dress for the wedding, and you must give me your photograph in costume taken together. *Sans adieu.* I think just as you are would be *charmant.* No? Well, I know the exact pose, only you must let me know beforehand. I think——"

"Countess Isaure," said de Fiorani.

"*Mon cher* Count?"

"Do you wish to hear something quite shocking?"

"Naturally."

"We all do," said Beaufort; "what is it?"

"Léon has just remembered the following: As we passed a little chapel once, in Savoie, we read—— Oh—I cannot tell this before a young lady."

Count de Fiorani ceased speaking. In vain the endeavor to make him go on. "I am a respecter of youth," he said, firmly; "some other time, when Miss has become Mrs., then you shall hear the very good story."

Mrs. Adrian was laughing heartily. "Just like the Count," said she; then she laughed again.

"How provoking!"

"My love," Mrs. Adrian's voice was delightfully mellow, "you cannot hear this. It is one of the penalties exacted by your youth."

"I hope, as madame, I shall hear everything and laugh myself to death."

"You probably will," said Léon, cheerfully; "to death or to life. But ta-ta, we must move on."

Beaufort drew closer to his *fiancée*. The night was beautiful. Near the shore a long band of fitful light marked the phosphorescent line of the crested waves; the white pebbles slipped back into the water with a continuous gurgle. The caps were glistening with sparkling foam. Away off as far as eye could reach, a shimmering shaft of light fairly pierced the centre of the sea and bore down through the heart of the ocean straight to the very edge of the beach where they were standing.

The Earl looked in the face of his dear charge.

"See! there is a huge boulder just away from the shore. You will sit there upon it, and I will throw myself on the sand at your feet. You must now hear my confession," He led her to the spot and helped her into place. A furred cloak enveloped her, for even in June there is always a stiff breeze at night at the seaside. Looking into her calm eyes, he commenced the recital of a most curious tale.

She listened amazed. Before he had finished her heart spoke. The voice was broken by emotion, but her great love found expression in a few words.

"What you have told me passes comprehension! I give myself to you freely—gladly. I loved you

from the first moment I saw you, but I dared not permit myself to think of any one but my poor brother. Then, when he died I vowed to find out the real culprit, and at least avenge his memory. Until that vow was accomplished I could never think of love. I hoped, in the meantime, to hear from you ; but I now understand your silence."

"Remember that I never saw a paper, Allani never spoke of your family, and I had forbidden Brandon to ever speak aught of you. I was waiting for one word from your lips ; so sure that, sooner or later, you would make some sign. Destiny had thrown us together, destiny would reunite us. In nearly two years you never once sent to me."

She blushed. "Shall I tell you what I thought of doing ?"

"Yes."

"Sending you one little word, saying I am free ; but how should I have dared ? Never to have attempted to see me ! Remember you left me in such anger. Besides, how could I know but—but that you already loved some one else ?"

"That you knew was utterly impossible, and highly improbable. In fact, it *could* not be."

She shook her head. "I do not know ! Men change ; it might have been possible."

"Tell me, did you never suspect who Felden was ?"

"Never ; but *à propos*, the check I——"

"The five thousand francs belong to me. I shall keep them in a place of honor. Just to think, the first (and perhaps last) money that I have ever

earned! I am proud of it, but God knows, my work was hard enough. Once you frightened me. Do you recollect?"

"No."

"It was at the American Minister's. You told me you thought that you recognized my voice."

"Well, you see that I did. Thought, indeed." But suddenly: "Why did you cease coming for so long a time?"

"That was the reason. I feared recognition. It was impossible always to disguise my feelings as well as my voice. I was burning with jealousy. You do not know, but when I said I knew all, I thought I did. The day of your *soirée*, Brandon breakfasted in the Luxembourg Quarter, and heard by chance some Americans talking. They spoke of a very young man who had committed forgery and murder, and who had baffled the authorities for a year, and of his flight from San Francisco accompanied by a beautiful woman supposed to be his wife, but in reality his paramour. There was a rumor that she was living in Paris in fine style, received in the best of society, and deceiving the whole world. Although Brandon had met Mrs. Adrian some time ago, he dreaded knowing more. You might both have been innocent victims, and you yourself might have been implicated——"

"How can you say such things of me?"

"My dear love," he answered, "I am a man of the world. Remember that many more extraordinary things than that have really happened. I was racked with torment, thinking that you were not

married. After my conversation with Brandon, and only on the night of the—the death, did I realize that, no matter what you were, I loved you enough to ignore the past. Besides what Brandon had heard, he also had a slip (from some vile Parisian correspondent to a Philadelphia paper), hinting at many mysteries, the expected *exposé* of a family in high life, with bits of scandal promised tempting enough to satisfy the taste of the most sensational. How could one but remark the coincidence, and knowing what I did, I feared the worst, with these damning circumstances constantly before me. I never loved you less; on the contrary, I only felt your position more desperately and more deeply. I had refused to give ear to what Athol told me. Imagine the marvellous *dénouement* of the night following the *soirée*. Try and realize with what grief I felt myself forced to believe in what he had related me! Were not the circumstances exact in every particular? I still doubted, until I heard a man raving of crime and blood. Do you remember what I offered—*all* I offered! My love must have been great to overlook everything. In the very face of the most condemning evidence, I realized that, in spite of all, I could still love you, and protect you with my name. I could not reconcile myself, however, to your hard-heartedness in letting me go, perhaps for ever, without one word of hope. It seemed so unnatural, so extraordinary, when you had confessed that you loved me, to be so unbending. I could not understand it."

"A vision of what I had to accomplish determined

me," she said. "Also, I dared not accept the sacrifice of yourself at such a time; nor could I bear to think of ever bringing a name to an honest home that was not as clear in the world's eyes as your own. If afterward you should come to me, all would be well. If not, we had better separate. I still wished, however, to make one effort to see you, at least to send a line——"

"Send it to-morrow," said the Earl, promptly. "I will answer in person."

She looked fondly at him. "There is nothing more to explain, dear. Shall we join the party?"

"Yes," half reluctantly, "I suppose we *must*. But you have forgotten something."

"I?"

"Yes. Tell me how much you love me."

She must have given him a satisfactory answer. It is a pity that these little scenes between lovers cannot be quite secret. Venus, looking down upon them, laughed, and told it to the other stars. The little waves coming in to the shore carried the news back again out to sea. The pebbles seemed to chatter on the sand; the myriad phosphorescent eyes glowed and glared upon them, then dived under the waves with a most malicious gleam. The night wind stirred in the distant trees, the many thousand voices of nature kept up murmuring sounds that said, as plainly as possible, "We hear you, we understand, we are witnesses." The lovers wandered on. The dense foliage of the Landslip surrounded them with constant and flickering shadows. Like Pandora and Epimetheus in the gardens of ancient

Hellas, their thoughts were attuned to the mysterious charm of enchanting night. To them the whole world was poetry, and the refrain of its minstrelsy was love. They sang with the chorus of birds :

> "Every flutter of the wing,
> Every note of song we sing,
> Every murmur, every tone,
> Is of love and love alone."

> "Hark ! listen ! Hear how sweetly overhead
> The feathered flute-players pipe their songs of love,
> And echo answers, love, and only love."

On, on, through thicket and grove they still wandered. There was only a vague idea now of rejoining the others. Where could one find them ? Some people passed, but at great intervals. No one seemed to recognize the Earl and his companion. Perhaps it was because all lovers look alike. Straying couples in deserted woodlands, fair night and starry skies, come home to every heart. Who has not wandered by love's Elysian streams ? Who has not accepted a betrothal witnessed by Saturn's triple circlet ? Who has not heard and repeated vows of love attested to by all the host of Nature's heavenly satellites ? Who has not done this ? who of us, in fact, has never been in love ? "

The sound of chattering voices broke upon the air ; then like an avalanche, the party came upon them.

"Naughty creatures," said Isaure, "we are just returning home. Where have you been ? "

"Why, why—we have been here, we were just coming to meet you," said Ethel.

"We have been telling each other something so *very* interesting," said Beaufort. "Time has flown unawares." Then he whispered to the Countess:

"Of course, one must forgive you. *N'est-ce pas*, Léon? we were once *flirts* ourselves."

Count Vandalin smiled for reply. He drew Ethel's hand under his arm, and under penalty of a great forfeit, forbade her speaking to Beaufort again that evening. Then they all went toward the house.

Alone in her room, Ethel threw open her window, and looked out on the night. Again she heard her lover's voice, again she wandered over the enchanted beach. Weariness finally overcame her. She slept. Her lips repeated mechanically again and again his words. Like a goddess she would slumber till dawn, and waking on the morrow, find again her Helios. Added to the voice of nightingales was that of zephyrs, stealing through the room singing softly, ever singing:

"Come from thy caverns dark and deep,
O son of Erebus and Night;
All sense of hearing and of sight
Enfold in the serene delight
And quietude of sleep!

"But open wide the gate of Horn
Whence, beautiful as plants, rise
The dreams of truth; with starry eyes,
And all the wondrous prophecies
And visions of the morn."

CHAPTER XXXI.

SEA-BATHING.

It sometimes rains at Shanklin. The day following Ethel's arrival was one of such memory. It poured so persistently that going out of doors was impossible. The Count and Countess, however, made it very pleasant for everybody. There was parlor croquet, cards, fortune telling, and another charming dinner at six with the de Fiorani. As usual at the seashore, the most violent storms come and go in a few short hours, and leave scarcely a trace. Only the green trees are greener, the flowers in the Chine hang their pretty heads, new ravines come to light in the landslip, and the beach is heavy with clogged sand. No bathing, only rest at home. The salt air always smells sweeter after a storm. The waves roll mountain high, the sun comes forth from smoky vapors.

"Now overhead a rainbow bursting through
The scattering clouds, shone, spanning the dark sea
Resting its bright base on the quivering blue;
And all within its arch appeared to be
Clearer than that without; and its wide hue
Waxed broad and waving like a banner free.

When four o'clock came it had already cleared up, and at dinner-time the party went to the house of the de Fiorani. The walk along the old country road was long but delightful. Fancy being shut up in the house a whole day at a watering place.

They had a delightful French dinner. The cottage was a tiny chalet in a perfect bower of verdure. The dining-room looked out upon a lovely garden where the sweetest flowers in Shanklin bloom. The nightingales commenced singing, the odor of revivified nature embalmed everything about the little place. Isaure had prohibited flirting, and Beaufort behaved admirably. He was happy in being *near* his love. Many things were talked about at this dinner—the last court ball, and a friend's pumps.

"How did he manage?" said Léon—"*mon cher*, he is not a Hercules—he is very thin, *au contraire*."

"Oh," briskly, "his costumer—ah! my tailor arranged all that. He had so many orders before, however, that he barely got there in time. What a thing to make up one's mind to go to a court ball."

"Yes, and one's legs," adds the Count.

"I saw the Prince day before yesterday; what a handsome man he is. I think his face is really most agreeable." Mrs. Adrian's voice was calm and quite unamerican.

Count Léon laughed. "He's a capital good fellow any way, and no fool. Do you know what he said at Cowes the other day?"

"No, what was it?" a chorus of voices.

"He met Poole, and chatted (as he often does) in a friendly fashion. Then he said, indifferently:

'Well, how do you find Cowes?' 'Awh, your Royal Highness, Cowes—of course—awh, yes, Cowes—nice place, your Royal Highness, but the society is rather mixed.' 'Hang it all, Poole,' responded the Prince; 'you can't expect to find us all tailors.'"

"What a jolly story! of course it's true?"

Beaufort asked the question.

"Perfectly," said Léon, "and I know several others which——"

"Spare us, dear," said Isaure; "besides, it's time to return home." The hostess pleaded in vain. Isaure is a slender woman, but when her mind is made up she has quite the determination of a very stout one.

They walked over to the hotel, along the dark hedges, straight by the roadway. The longest route, but the prettiest. The longest is always the prettiest and the nicest in the country; when one is returning from a pleasant house with one's lady-love on one's arm. The amiable hostess, with her husband, kindly consented to "walk along too;" then they separated for the evening at the door of the hotel, with the promise of meeting in the morning at an early hour. At nine o'clock Isaure's voice was heard.

"Fine weather."

"Glorious," said Ethel.

"Do come, Léon."

"Yes, dear."

"We are all waiting."

Beaufort was already outside of the hotel gate. A young gentleman stood beside him.

"Mr. Brandon!" said Ethel, "what a real pleasure! This is—My lord," turning to the Earl, "was this intended as a surprise?"

"A very great one," said Beaufort. "I knew nothing of it myself. This morning Bell handed me a note, saying that Mr. Brandon had arrived. Here he is; and—and," in an undertone, "we have been up since seven talking, and I have explained everything to him. He is delighted. Oh, I knew he would be."

Ethel blushed. How strange that a constitutionally pale young woman can always blush just at the right moment.

Mr. Brandon kissed her hand. "Let me add my sincerest congratulations, and beg you to forgive my once unhappy interference."

She pardoned him with her sweetest smile.

"Let the dead past bury its dead." They never referred to *that* again.

Mrs. Adrian would bathe. Louise, Isaure's maid, had a Frenchy-looking bundle. Bell was ostensibly walking near her. He had another bundle. His cold, old English-valet eyes were now and then cast half tenderly upon her; upon Louise. Romances are not always born under silken canopies and cradled beneath *point d'Alençon.* Poor people have been known to make love to each other, and to enjoy it. We do not understand how it is possible, but it *is* so. Do not for one moment think, however, that a well-to-do valet, with a real peer for his master, can come within that category. No more can the fine waiting-maid of a countess, who deigns to

dress her mistress, and to undress her in order to—dress herself. Louise tripped along. She reached, nay, *had* the style. The next thing noticed was that Bell had two bundles instead of one. Oh, ensnared valet! Oh, giddy girl! where will ye both end? Probably at a fancy ball, dressed in your master's best clothes.

At the beach the crowd was animated and mostly old-English. What a lovely promenade is, to be sure, a long sweep of white-sanded shore, dozens of little houses upon wheels drawn up in line just on the edge of the water, and a continual hum of merry voices. The well-seasoned shrieks from many courageous dowagers constantly escaped from the waves. The bathing-teachers, strong, herculean men and women, were leading trembling girls out to sea; young maidens blushed as their bare ankles grated against the sand. Newly married couples tenderly made their way among the older salts; a plunge here—a hallo there—and the morning's work was fairly under way.

Count Léon, with the other gentlemen, had already bathed. Mrs. Adrian stepped into No. 10, Isaure into No. 11, and Ethel decided not to try it that day.

They selected a charming bit of white-pebbled sand and threw themselves upon it. Shawls, cushions, rugs, everything was provided for comfort, and half-sitting, half-reclining, they watched the merry bathers. A charming, full-bearded Englishman joined them. His name was Grayson—he was heir-presumptive to a title and large estates. Naturally he made a delightful addition to the party. He was

an old friend of Beaufort, and also of Count Léon. Some Americans were talking in a group to the left. To Ethel's surprise, she recognized some old friends in Mr. de Quincey, Mr. Darvies, and Mr. Godwin, of San Francisco, besides a group of well-known American yachtsmen. They recognized Cyril Ormond, one of the best fellows in the world, a success in every way. His honest, handsome face was quite as welcome a sight on the sands of Shanklin as pacing the deck of his piratically named yacht, the "Brigand." Looking out to sea was the well-known Lewis Jansen, who sent some canvas-back ducks to her Majesty. Near him was his aspiring friend, Roger Millien, who expected to go to Osborne to help eat them. Handsome Jean Warden was nonchalantly twirling his blonde moustache. He looked, however, quite the master of the "Undaunted." The "Marquis of Hoboken" was the only one who seemed a little disenchanted. His fine, piercing gray eyes took in the scene. "It's all well enough, boys," he said, "to talk 'Solent' and 'Isle of Wight,' but give me plain Martha's Vineyard and a bit of American coast."

More new-comers! Just then two charming gentlemen came up to Miss Leslie, accompanied by Mr. Mars, the Oppenheims.

"Really," said Ethel, turning to Beaufort, "you must not be jealous, but I have a special admiration for these old friends. One forgets their enormous wealth, they are so amiable. Mr. Gratiot once said," laughing frankly, "that they had all the money that the Rothschilds had not."

"What a jolly description," said Beaufort; "and —present me to your friends."

What a series of introductions. Everybody must know everybody else at the seashore. At last places were found for all, and they looked out upon the sea. One noticed that the peculiar costumes of the lady bathers were thrown into bold relief by the indiscreet waves. Why was the sun so bright and hot? Why were the waters, for miles out, so clear! Why were those near the shore like pellucid mirrors reflecting and magnifying every living creature beneath their surface? Why? Why?

I am sure I don't know. It often happens at the seaside, it *very* often happens at Shanklin. These traitorous waters betrayed even the most innocent who had confided in them. Perhaps, before trusting so much to the "briny," it would have been as well to look more particularly at one's own precaution for protection from public gaze; but we do not moralize, we are—cosmopolitan.

The French bathing costume is a delightful suggestion, the German a petticoat protection, the American an illusion, the English a revelation. At Shanklin (we speak now of Shanklin), the garment then *à la mode* was voluminous. It consisted of an enormous circular or cloak with long tabs. It was made of most diaphanous material, not unlike the airy fabric with which the traditional Greek slave is enveloped. The handsome maid, wife, mother, or grandmother, of perfidious Albion, clouds herself with this most intense of all bathing costumes. Underneath, be it understood, nature, in all the grace of her un-

dulating sweetness, is left in untrammelled plastic nudity. She is amply—nay amphi-theatrically—protected from the gaze of those who sit upon the shore, those wretched loungers who go to Shanklin for—the season ; for the beach, like the theatre, has its bald-headed row, and the proscenium boxes hold the young bloods, the gallery the gods, and patent respectability sits in the orchestra stalls.

Beaufort and his party were naturally near the music. The band just then struck up the can-can from *Belle Helène.*

"Great Heaven!" said Léon, "look!"

All looked. Of course, they were seated on what is called the ladies' side. The view was perfect. The scene in—(the water)—describable.

One of the Greek slaves was freed from every restraint. She was disentangled from the strong clasp of the bather, her still youthful blood was leaping in her veins, her limbs felt an undine lightness. She would swim, alone, free, and unconfined. She had cast off prejudice and—and her mantel. (Perhaps, after Joseph's rejection of his own it no longer had value in any one's eyes.) She was ambling under the limpid waves as woman first came into the world. The treacherous, diaphanous drapery floated on the surface of the water as a cloud floats in the empyrean, or a white pond-lily on the Lake of Lethe. It was floating, floating unconfined above, and my lady was floating, floating uncovered below.

"They all do it," said the Count ; "we have been here three successive seasons."

"There goes another," said de Fiorani. "She has uncovered one tab of the circular. She looks like a swan."

"*A propos*," said Léon, "I have an impromptu conundrum just ready. 'What was the mission of the swan upon earth?' Guess! guess again! it's *so* simple. Impossible!—it is so simple no one can but guess it. Answer: 'He came to a young woman to—to—mis—lead her.' Don't you see the simplicity of the thing? Leda——"

"Oh! never do such a thing again, Léon." Isaure's voice was loudest. She had finished her bath and approached just in time to hear the impromptu. She was poking her parasol in the sand. All laughed, however. It's so easy to laugh at another's folly.

Bell came and begged to see his master. He handed him a pile of telegrams and some letters. The Earl had given orders that his mail should be brought down to the beach. He knew what he was expecting.

Another one of the pleasures at the seashore—lying on the white sand, near those one loves; going over the morning's mail with news of those who love us; in sight of the bathers, in sound of the sea, content with all the world, and, rarer joy, content with one's self.

"*A propos* of letters," said Beaufort, "where is Allani's? You promised to show it me?"

She drew it from her pocket, explaining softly: "You will understand, dear. He—he had told me that he loved me. He swore to be my friend, but

he said farewell. This letter was sent in response to my written refusal to accept his offer."

"We will read it together going home," and they left the beach.

As they came to the Chine he stopped. They chose a sheltered spot. "This is the place, dear." Then he read, she looking at him the while.

"My Dear Miss Ethel :—Your letter has given me exquisite pain. I humbly entreat for your pardon, if I have merited your just displeasure. Let me only plead that my language must have been a false echo of my thoughts, if it failed to convey to you their perfect homage, with some faint expression of the happiness and honor I derived from my visit. I have often wondered before, what Lazarus would have felt had Dives given him that one drop of water for which he prayed, and whether it would not have increased his thirst. I know the secret now, and still will have a great longing until I see you again. I cannot deny myself the anticipation of that happiness some day, but—I shall see you very seldom. With such beauty and genius for a freight, your ship will sail, with its white canvas spread, to happy islands, while mine is stranded ; and on the uncertain seas of life thus much at least is sure, that the rich galleon upon which your royal standard is displayed will exchange no signals with the poor bark whence flutters my small rag of bunting, faded and wind-tossed. To me, the loss.

"A poet only could answer your gentle letter fittingly, and I wish that I were a poet high and noble enough to aspire to your friendship, as I can have—only that. A mere versifier might write something, though unworthy to be read, if he remembered how the gladness which your presence brings must always be dashed at the thought of losing it. He would say in rhyme—

"Frown not, sweet maid, if when with thee
I feel not rapture wholly,
For, aye, the heart that's filled with joy
Runs o'er with melancholy.

To streams that glide in noon the shade
From summer skies is given;
And if my brow reflect the cloud,
'Tis but the cloud of Heaven.

Thine image glassed within my soul
So well the mirror keepeth,
That chide me not, if with the light,
The shadow also sleepeth.

"Can I forget the happy hours spent in your society? Can I forget that you offer me your friendship? Can I forget that, where'er I may wander, I have the proud right to wear an amulet, your regard, in my bosom? My heart is torn, but it has known *regret.*

"Permit me then to remain, with the deepest admiration and respect, dear Miss Ethel, your most faithful and devoted servant, now and ever,

"ALLANI."

CHAPTER XXXII.

LORD BEAUFORT TO HIS MOTHER.

My Dearest Mother :

We were married yesterday. As I told you, Ethel would not have a swell wedding, so we went to the little church in Shanklin and stepped off in real orthodox fashion. I am glad you find her photograph so handsome, but it doesn't half do her justice. Alice's little letter made us roar with laughter. What a dear child ; I long to give her a good kiss. The Count gave Ethel away, and Mrs. Adrian (by the way, she *is* a jolly party) nearly broke down at the ceremony. Everybody was there—that is to say, of the intimate friends. Brandon was best man, of course. We missed you. I scarcely expected that you would come, as it was an impromptu, but I know we shall be happy. I am in the seventh heaven already (interruption by a pair of arms around my neck. It is bad form, but I suppose young wives all do it). Ethel sends her love here, and adds a thousand thanks for your sweet letter. I knew you'd do the handsome thing by my wife in the end. We shall be at Beaufort by the last of September. How I hope Ethel will like it. Again she interrupts. 'I know I

shall, dear.' (She has positively been looking over my shoulder.) I hope you won't think by this that we are frightful spoons. I am quite like any other married man, precisely the same as before marriage. Most men are not changed a bit. Heaven knows how we will spend the rest of the summer. Ethel won't yacht. She is already asserting her authority. That is because I have married a woman who has money. You know I always swore never to marry one without. Any girl stepping into wealth from poverty would soon break a man up ; but the best wife in the world for any man to have is a woman who has lived in luxury all her life. She knows the exact value to put upon money, and her husband may stand some show of getting a little affection from her. Should the worst ever come to the worst, she could demonstrate that her happiness was in his love, not in his purse, and they'd pull through all right. But a woman who has never known even comfort, bah—thinks of titles, settlements—(I would give Beaufort to Ethel outright, although she doesn't want it) swell turn-outs, balls, and society. She thinks that these things bring happiness, and looks upon marriage as a patent safety-escape from poverty, and her head is so turned by the novelty of having plenty of money that love is a secondary consideration.

I am very glad, however, that I am saved from any doubt in the matter. These things are good in theory. Hard cash is a reality that is most agreeable ; still, if Ethel had not had a halfpenny, she would have been my lady all the same. The dear thing ! I must cut this short, as we run up to London in an

hour. How is your neuralgia? Don't think I had forgotten it. Of course, you are better; however, if the beastly rain continues, how can you expect to be quite well? Ethel says she knows a cure for neuralgia, some patent American stuff. (Those Americans are very fiends for original patents. The only man who ever got ahead was Noah in that Ark business, but they swear the Dove was an original United States invention.) I'll send it from London. She knows a cure for one thing—the heart-ache—bless her. I am cured. In fact, I wouldn't know I had such a thing as a heart now, since I'm married. I hope you'll get a parcel I just posted off, all right. Ethel has sent some diamond earrings to Alice. She says she is quite old enough to wear them; all the little girls do in America. But her ladyship isn't a bit of an American except, except in beauty. Good-by, dear, dearest mother. Think of having me all to yourself for the rest of your lifetime, once I get home. I shall not leave it again soon, I can tell you. Kiss Alice for both of us. Just imagine my arms around your dear neck, and all of your children hugging you just as if we were—children. God bless you. I will write from London.

Your own affectionate son,

FRANCIS.

Shanklin, 28th June.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ETHEL BEAUFORT TO MRS. ADRIAN.

DEAREST AUNTIE:

What an idea. Tell you all about Beaufort (of course, if you wish it), and how I like my mother-in-law. I don't like her, I love her, and Alice is a perfect little darling. She is very funny. Fancy her asking me if I had a rich American picked out for her. She told me that she had overheard her governess (an ancient demoiselle Garnier) talking. She had said that nothing was thought of now but wealth, and that when one had station enough, one must exchange one's good blood for American dollars. "I am young now," said Alice (she is not twelve yet), "but I can be a *fiancée* at once. I wish to marry a miner or a stockbroker. She (Garnier) says that their wives have the best times." I have called the governess a "demoiselle Garnier." She is very old, straight-laced, and really, I believe in my heart, no more *French* than I am. But about the castle. Shall I really tell you minutely? (How I miss you, dear. I hadn't thought to say so before, of course you knew it.) This will be a guide-book description, so beware. I never can do it again, so

be sure and write Uncle Desmond and all my friends just exactly what it's like. I am so glad that I am home. Yesterday, after luncheon, we went over the house. Oh, it *is* so beautiful.

Now imagine you are here, and coming to pay me a visit. You walk up to the front door, and you see something like this. Stop, I will copy the exact description from an old book that lies on my table. Attention! "Beaufort Castle"—(isn't it strange to think that I am reading about my own house from a strange book?—I forgot to tell you that I am looking uncommonly well. Devonshire certainly agrees with me)—"Beaufort Castle is four stories in height, and the architecture a model of the best workmanship of the fifteenth century." (This point is very clear.) "The square blocks of white stone, that fit so beautifully one into the other in the façade, are alternately carved with the bunch of drooping quatrifoglia" (a four-leaf clover, auntie, but it sounds better in Italian). "The principal façade is divided into three panels separated by narrow fluted columns, rising unbroken to the third story. A balcony the entire length of the house is covered with flowering vines and ivy. This balcony is in stone" (we walked there last evening; the view is perfectly lovely all around—well, you will see it later of course), "as are the two terraces surmounting either tower. They are doubly dentellated, as is the fashion in many of the old Italian houses existing since the fourteenth century. In the centre of the front façade is the entrance" (the one that you will come in at, dear). "The doors are of oak, so old and ponderous that one

hand alone could scarcely swing them. The coronet and blazonry of the dual house, Beaufort and Brandon is carved in each door" (the same that is stamped on the paper—how do you like it ?). "The work is the handicraft of Munich master carvers, rare in its perfection and design.

"Entering from the front, one finds one's self in the principal apartment, a room of grand dimensions. It runs straight across the entire extent of the castle, the ceiling reaching almost to the upper terrace. It is a marvel of exquisite wood carving. There are several large panels, these divided into smaller squares, the beams supporting the timbers running crosswise; carved with a Greek pattern favorite of the time, and beautiful in its simplicity." (I adore Greek patterns, don't you ? And bye the bye, let me thank you here for the box. The dresses are simply lovely. Latreille has outdone herself. The one in heliotrope with the Byzantine trimming is most becoming. I wore it last night at dinner. I think—where was I ? telling you about the house, of course ; but I had to mention this fact. It is *so* important.) "In the centre panel is an original—a Madonna with her child" (such a fat little cherub. I wonder if I will ever have——). "Four other paintings decorate the ceiling in the form of a four-leaf clover. These are all framed in Venetian carvings of gold and bronzed woods, uniquely and beautifully carved.

"The alternate panels are without canvasses; instead, on the wood, in different shades of blue, from the deepest lapis-lazuli to the pale sky blue,

are bunches of cyclamen and quatrifoglia in the hands of diminutive cupids reposing on clouds."

Just imagine it, auntie! The effect is so beautiful and strange in contrast with the gilded Venetian frames and dark colors of the carved wood, it's like looking at a bed of sapphires on a jewelled disk. But you will see it when you come. Now I am reading again.

"Very few royal dwellings can boast so splendid a ceiling. Two arches are supported on either side by superb cariatids, and to the right is another grand drawing-room, style *Empire*" (newly furnished and decorated in my honor); "to the left is a magnificent salon corresponding with this, with rare paintings and the same lapis-lazuli cupids looking down from the burnished oak. The great beauty of these apartments are some marvellous Gobelins, after those made for Catherine de Medicis. The interior of the castle has been restored and shaped expressly to receive this magnificent series of works of art.

"To-day money cannot buy their equal; and to the racing proclivities of a Prince of the blood" (the Duke of G.—dear Francis told me his name; he sacrificed the whole lot for a stud of thoroughbreds), "the Lords of Beaufort owe one of their greatest treasures——"

Now here is a bit of history Francis told me. It is not in the book, but it may interest you. Catherine de Medicis (when her husband, Henry II., was killed by Montgomery) so deplored the loss of her lord and sovereign, that she ordered a lasting monument to his memory in the shape of these Gobelins. *A propos*, did you know that Gobelins

used to be called Arras, Arazzi, the name of the city in Flanders where this industry originally flourished in the sixteenth century? I *never* did.

This tribute is constructed from the allegorical subject of the story of Mausole and Artemisia. Catherine ordered a famous artist of the time to copy the works of art from the Château d'Annet, and he has faithfully reproduced them in the tapestry."

Now this, Aunt Adrian, is what follows and is also from the book. No, I'll tell you myself, it is more natural; you will prefer my simple way without any Latin. There are four enormous curtains, or panels with side pieces, and four others a little smaller in size, that complete the set. One is called the Fountain of Diana. Three graces support a basin in which reclines the famous Diana de Poitiers. She is completely nude, her arms clasping a stag's head. At her feet lies a dog. (This, auntie, is *so* funny. It says in Latin that the dog *is* visible, as though one could see it if it were *not* visible.) It is an exact likeness of the most celebrated and beautiful woman of her time. It is from the statue made by *Jean Goujon.*

That she could enslave a father and son was noteworthy; that she could also fascinate the wife and mother is strange; but the most remarkable thing is this: The husband and lover dead, the widow causes the portrait of his doubly-faithful mistress to be made the principal one in a quartette, when even the three graces appear but secondary in beauty and charm. Their sculptured forms, smaller than this goddess of the bath, are used to throw in bolder relief her extraordinary symmetry and sensuous beauty.

Now think of it, auntie ; she had lovers at sixty. This portrait must have been made not far from that period of her life. She appears in the flower of her youth and comeliness, which makes us doubt the exactitude of her age. However, a woman, I suppose, best judges and appreciates a woman's beauty. For Catherine de Medicis to find her king's favorite a place in the lasting tribute she designs to his memory—a tribute where the most lovely figures are reproduced, and to give preference to that favorite over all the graces, demonstrates that she must have been a wondrously beautiful person. The souvenir so religiously guarded, and zealously exhibited to visitors at the Hotel Cluny, in Paris, shows that the lady's modesty was not put to the test early or late in life. Her royal lover evidently did not believe that virtue, which has to be so strictly guarded, was not worth its sentinel. Preferring to run no risk, however, he took his precautions, peculiar precautions ; but, for that epoch, they seemed necessary.

Thanks to Diana's vanity, the world possesses a work of art in her picture. Few ideal Venuses could be more beautiful, few real graces more seductive. . . . . .

How tired I am ; but you asked me to tell you all about it, and I have. Francis has just brought me a cup of tea. Is there anything more refreshing than a cup of tea? I believe my head aches a little, but I will finish ; this is from the book :

" Besides the tapestry are numerous cabinets and wondrous pieces of furniture, each untold in value, with inlaid woods, ivory, or metals, and carvings

imitated from Michael Angelo: these Greek gods and goddesses might have been made yesterday; the woods are worm-eaten, and some of the ivory is broken off." (As I told Francis, even the most *frantic* bric-à-brac hunter would at once realize their value and genuine antiquity.)

It is impossible to describe half the things in these wonderful rooms, but I will try and tell you of a few more—(I believe I am a trifle tired)—but I know you must be so interested. "There is a superb chandelier of real rock crystal on a pedestal of bronze and cedar, made at Munich, of course; but the real treasures are these.

"There are four pedestals supporting four statues, carved by the great Erasmus Grosser, in 1473. They *are* in wood that has now the tone of ivory." (They are so life-like that I expect to see them step down from their heights some day and join in an old-fashioned minuet at an instant's notice.) "They are really four madmen, or court jesters, and dressed in the costume of those times. (So queer.)

"The autograph of the artist in quaint lettering at the foot of the statue adds to their value and authenticity."

They were sold in Munich eighty years ago for a mere song. At that time valuable works of art were hidden in half the garrets of Europe. Francis would not take ten thousand pounds for them. He has just come in and looks over my shoulder (I am not as tired as I was). He has brought me another cup of tea—and has impertinently been reading my letter. What do you think he said? "Just like a wo-

man—writing a yard of rot; when she reads it she'll know you cribbed the whole thing. Just like a woman, by jove! send her the book." "Just like a woman indeed!" "Send her the book!" (I am sure dear aunty, you would much prefer I should tell it you myself?) Just like a *man*, I say, and his laziness, not to write.

Francis is getting royal in his brevity. It reminds me of the giddy young American in London, who performed through the telephone to show it off for the benefit of her Majesty the Queen, who was stationed at Windsor. Vainly desiring a surcease from "Three old maids of Lee." (Pegg Woffington, Hamlet in the original A. D.)—and Forget-me-not I suppose, the line was drawn after the tenth verse of "Nanie, wilt thou gang awa' wi me." Her Majesty was asked, "how she liked it." The Empress of India replied: "Cut the wire."

Your loving niece,

ETHEL BEAUFORT.

P. S. Don't fail us for All-Hallow-Eve. Such doings, such a ball! Francis is still superstitious (so like a man), and it will be just two years ago that night since first we met. I hope this will reach you immediately. I shall send it to the old address. Do write soon. E.

P. P. S. How *very* funny! I have put "In Haste" on the envelope quite by accident. Of course you will get the letter sooner.—Does it not seem strange to sign myself Ethel Beaufort?

THE END.

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